

2001 Eckhart Tolle Rains Retreat Breitenbush Oregon October 2001 part 1 of 2

[Speaker 1] (0:00 - 5:38:12)

We are spending a few days together, it seems, unless some of you run away before. But a few days is enough for boredom to arise, or discontent or restlessness. Restlessness, normal states.

So you don't necessarily have to run away the moment that arises. Could happen tonight, or it could happen in two days' time. Just watch the boredom, the restlessness, the discontent.

And then it passes, and you're still here. Now you might think that I could have chosen a better climate, a warmer climate, or a better time of year for the retreat. Wouldn't it be nice if it were warm and had very long days and could lie out in the open?

Wouldn't it be a more fulfilling experience if that were different? In some ways, perhaps. But it was chosen on purpose so as not to provide a totally fulfilling experience.

Not that there are that many experiences that are completely fulfilling. So as far as experiences go, I don't know how you would rate our retreat, you can tell me afterwards, on the scale of one to ten, of fascination or fascinating, how interesting it is as an experience. No doubt you will have beautiful experiences here, the hot tub, that's a beautiful experience, but you can't spend twelve hours a day in it, so it passes fairly quickly.

And then, especially as we will progressively move into more silence, I don't start the retreats by saying, we're not going to speak now for the rest of the week. That's too much of a shock to the system. So gradually we move into that.

And as we move into that, what you notice then, although of course the hot tubs are still there, and the beautiful trees, but you can't maybe walk for that long, it might rain or it might be too cold, you might notice, especially as we move into silence, an absence of things to fulfill you, to keep your interest going, an absence of interesting experiences, although there will be a few here and there, but not enough for the greedy mind, and there's nothing personal in that, that always seeks for more to add to me, collector of experiences, with which I can then identify and that make me feel a little bit more. And so there comes, and this is why it is likely, or possible, or likely, that waves of discontent, restlessness and boredom may arise in you, because although it is nice here, very nice, the mind after a day or two or three says, yes, it's nice, but it's not enough, it's not interesting enough. My first retreat that I did with a group a few years ago in North America, a small retreat, the woman who runs the retreat center after three or four days asked me, are they bored yet?

And I said, I don't know, I think some are, and she said, oh good, then it's working. So if you, there's more to this, or less to this, rather, than another experience, although on the level of experiences, of course, it also, that dimension is here, but you would probably only rate it on a level of one to ten as three, or as an experience. So we are not here to add a further experience that you can then remember, but to go deeper with what is, and what is to the mind may at times not be enough, not seem enough.

The first day or two it will be happy, because everything is new perhaps, and then not enough happening, and what it then does, it experiences a wave of boredom or restlessness, it will then entertain itself, especially as we move into silence, you can't, it cannot externalize its noise, the mind will then become more noisy within, and you will think all kinds of fascinating and interesting things, and you won't be here, the body will be here, and you'll be somewhere else.

So here, the important thing to know, we're not here to add more to ourselves, but to discover, to find something that's already here in you, it doesn't need to be added. And it may well be that most of your life you've gone through life looking for more to add to me, possessions, status, knowledge, better physical health, enlightenment, that's to watch the movement of needing to add what the Buddha called desire that continues. And of course, where do you, where does this come, where is the adding going to be fulfilled in the future, so it's that need for looking for the next thing to fulfill me, because I'm not enough yet.

And when the next thing is not in sight, then restlessness or boredom or discontent arise. And so you continuously miss yourself. Not that it is, there's nothing wrong with improving yourself, improving your physical health, adding knowledge, adding experiences, but in the expectation that it will fulfill you, that it will give you an enhanced self, a greater, deeper sense of self, it doesn't work on that level.

On other levels it's fine, it doesn't work on that level, and that's the only level that we are interested in here. So we stay with the simple suchness of this moment, even if to the mind it doesn't seem enough, not good enough, or it might even complain, it shouldn't be the way it is. And you will have something to complain about, you will find something to complain about, of course the mind will find it, easily.

And in that, the sense of self gets strengthened also, because if you complain about something, you are right about something, and another person or situation is wrong about something, so you complain about it. In the mind you might not speak about it, but it's a mind movement, whether it's externalized as words or whether it remains in the head, it doesn't matter, it's a deep-seated, collective mind pattern that the sense of self that we might call ego, the egoic sense of self needs. And sooner or later you will find that mind pattern arising.

If only, it might complain about, not enough, this is not interesting enough, or it might

complain about little insignificant things, but it will blow them up into something big, about your bed, or your cabin, or the showers, or the food, or somebody you are sitting with at dinner table, or the person you are sharing the cabin with, or as you sit here, observe the mind coming in, not wanting to listen, or starting to complain. And why is that so satisfying to the self?

Because it grows through it. And in its illusion it believes that it has diminished something or someone through its complaining, and by diminishing something or someone, that it deludes itself that it can grow, it grows through that. Its sense of being right gets enhanced, and to be right is the greatest thing for the egoic self, the mind made self.

I am right about this situation, of course I am. So to watch that, you can watch that, it's so much there, so that may arise, and when it does you can watch it, be present as that mind movement arises, otherwise you become the mind movement, then you are the self. It doesn't want you to be present, and of course when you complain it's something you don't want to be here, you don't want this, you want this now to be different, or you want to be in a different now, but not in this now.

So our practice here is to watch those mind movements as they come, so that you are not totally drawn into them, and being forced to become them, and then you are a complaining little me entity, but to watch those mind movements as they come. And then our main practice here is the state of attention, the state of presence, that's the only thing I can show you, that is the state of aware presence. Nothing else is being taught here, just that.

And you won't get it through the words, although the words are useful little signposts, just as you won't get to Rome by looking at a signpost that says Rome. You can't, the words alone are not it. You can only get it through tuning yourself into a state out of which the words come, or one could say the stillness in between and underneath the words, a state of consciousness.

And the moment you recognize it as the state of alive stillness that is so alive and so peaceful, and the moment you recognize it and you think it's in somebody else like this form, it's in you, because it's only through the state arising in you that you can even recognize it in another. And when you recognize it, it's there. That is the new state of consciousness that is arising.

I say new, all words are limited. It's not new because it's always been your essence, but it's new to you if you have never known your essence. The times outside our gatherings when you are interacting with people or alone are as important as being in this room.

The practice there is the arising of presence, allowing the arising of presence through complete alignment with whatever arises in this moment while you're here. When you go

home you can go back to the old if that's better. A complete alignment with this moment, which it always is.

A non-resistance to this that takes you out of mind, identification with mind. That is your practice, and become familiar with the state of attention in which thoughts become secondary, the awakened state. Thoughts may still operate, but there is a spaciousness suddenly that's far greater than thought, and you can't understand it through the mind.

And a little hint, while you listen to the talk, pay equal attention to the silent spaces that are there continuously throughout the talk, pay as much if not more attention to the silent spaces than the words. Now for you to do that, that requires alertness. A high degree of alertness that most people still on this planet encounter very rarely, accidentally sometimes when faced with death or great danger.

They encounter it briefly, but most humans, although the state is coming in, for many, for the majority, it is still a completely unknown state. The arising of that state that I call presence. So what does this mean when you pay attention to the words, but you pay equal or more, really more attention to the silent spaces between the words?

What does that, what is that attention? Does it have any meaning? What does it mean to pay attention to the silent spaces?

It does not mean that you think about it and say, oh, there's another silent space. I wonder when the next one is going to come. For you to be able to pay attention to the silent spaces, you need to be alert, very alert.

Like that. That alertness and the stillness are really one and the same. When I speak about it, it sounds as if you were becoming aware of the silence.

But the silence or the stillness and the awareness are one. That is pure awareness arising in you. Pure intelligence.

The human mind is only a tiny aspect of that. And you thought that was you. It's going through a whole life thinking that that tiny aspect, that the human mind is me.

It's a mind-made, egoic sense of self that needs to be right and complains and does hundreds of things to keep itself going. And not knowing who you are beyond that, taking a narrow, personalized sense of little me for who you are, always grasping for more because it's not enough yet, and then fearful that the little that I have, I might lose that. And being trapped in a personalized, exclusively personalized little me, and from that personalized mental perspective, I judge the entire world.

I'm the judge of everything and everyone. And everything I perceive is filtered through that, through a personalized little me that is not big enough yet. And so you can see the distortions that come in, in all your perceptions, in all interactions, everything, this

personalized little me takes a mental position towards everything and the mental position is narrow and personalized and reactive.

And that's how people then go through their life. Trapped in that, everything, even the simplest perception is distorted through that. Human interactions become problem-ridden through that because they're all trapped in that.

This little me that takes a standard perspective, this is how I judge, this is how it is. This is how you are. That's who you are.

It attaches labels immediately onto everything and everybody, mental, because I need to know, I take, I identify then with perspectives. And an extreme version of this, a very extreme version of someone who identifies totally with one perspective, mind, thought, one thought, knows, you cannot, there is no situation that could be encapsulated, you can take a perspective on a situation through thought and express it and it would be a fragment of that situation. Even simple situations, when you apply a thought judgment to the situation, it will be one perspective on that situation.

And there are many other possible perspectives on that situation that thought could take. You can look at it from here, you can look at it from there or there, there's not one that contains the entire truth. Now this applies to anything you say about a human being, anything you say about a political situation, anything that you say, whatever it is, thought can only be fragmentary, can only be a fragment of the truth.

No thought can contain the totality, it's not big enough, it's always fragmented. And that's fine, on its own level it has its function. But to believe that you can utter something that is true and final, that your perspective is the true one on another human being or on yourself or on a situation, that is delusion.

You get trapped then in a narrow mind-made position and you identify with the position as me, and then you can't look beyond it anymore. An extreme version of that is the terrorist, who becomes an extreme manifestation of someone totally identified with one mental position, so you attach labels onto people so that you can no longer sense their aliveness. But the terrorist is only an extreme version.

The moment you call a person something and completely believe in that, through your mind, that's already the beginning of the same madness as the terrorist, which is an extreme version of that. To attach a label to a situation or person and completely believe in it, completely identify with that, identify with the mental position and think this is the truth, and you do it to another person and you've already committed an act of violence because you have deadened the aliveness of that human being to yourself. You can no longer sense that.

You've attached a label and you believe in it. Not that the mind will not often do that

because the momentum is still there, it's been there for many thousands of years, but to be totally trapped in that perspective, in that judgment, in that labeling, that is the beginning really of... You've already killed that person in a way because you've covered up the aliveness.

You take your mental position for reality and there's no human being about whom another perspective and position is not also true. You can say he's obviously a jerk, he did that and that, and she is a bitch, she did that's what she did and that's how she is. This is one perspective and it may be true from that perspective, yes he is a jerk, but there may be other situations where he's not a jerk.

Maybe to his daughter he's not, who knows? Maybe after he's suffered an accident or illness that jerk is no longer there, but you have already created a mental structure and you might not even see changes that happen then. So getting out of all that the mind produces, all the judging and labeling, stepping out of that personalized little me that lives in and through all those mind movements.

And then you can still express an opinion without being totally in it. It is one perspective. This is my preferred perspective and then there are other perspectives.

So you become greater than the mind, which you already are but didn't know it, from where you can contain mind and many different perspectives, this is rising above mind, rising above thought or going beyond thought as that which gives you your sense of self. That's why we're here. And so that that dimension that is vaster than thought can arise in you, so that you recognize that dimension.

Ultimately it is, it recognizes itself, it arises. So you're becoming familiar with that dimension of pure awareness, self-awareness. In which sometimes thought happens, the mind movement comes and goes.

So you'll practice here as far as possible to maintain that alertness. Not only while you're here, by paying attention to the silent spaces, without alertness it's not possible. If you only listen to words, it requires a certain degree of concentration, but there's far greater consciousness when you pay attention to the silent spaces.

And as you continue to do that here and when you move outside here in nature, bring the alertness into your sense perceptions. The same alertness that is here that enables you to listen to the silent spaces. You then walk around the forest, and I recommend that even if you've come with a friend or partner, at least for one hour each day you spend time completely alone with nature.

Or if it's too wet out, there's a sanctuary where you can sit and just be, but nature is the best. Spend at least an hour when you're not interacting, even during the time when we are silent anyway. And then bring the stillness, the alertness into your sense

perceptions.

So that you don't carry around that personalized little narrow me with its problems and its life situation, its past and its future. You don't carry the burden of that, and while you're walking through the forest you're already thinking about the problems facing you next week. Now the mind will be saying, yes, by walking around in a state of alertness in the forest, is that going to solve my problems?

Yes. And then the mind says, am I not running away? Am I not, I shouldn't even be here, the mind in some of you says, because there's so much that I have on my plate, as the expression goes, I've got so much on my plate and now why did I come here?

I mean, I haven't, gosh, so much I have to deal with and now I've taken a whole week and I'm not dealing with it. The mind will come up with things like that. You're not facing it, and then there's this little inner dialogue, you, you're not facing your problems, you're running away again, can't you see, this is pointless, all this talk about stillness and alertness, look at your problems.

You obviously have a lot to sort out first before you can even contemplate the transformation of consciousness. That's what the mind will tell you. The amazing thing is, facing, that is the true meaning of facing life, facing reality is this, facing each moment, or the only moment that there is, in the state of alert attention, alert presence, which is a state of complete openness to whatever is here, because I'm alert if I say internally, oh, this is awful, this shouldn't be happening.

You go beyond the judgments of good and bad as far as anything is concerned that arises at this moment. Nothing is either good or bad, Shakespeare said, but thinking makes it so. And we go beyond the thinking that makes it so.

And then the mind says, yes, but then I won't know anymore what's good and bad. How can I function in life? Well, wait and see.

See how you can function, how can you function at this moment without the judgment of good and bad, with a simple alignment with the is-ness of this moment, which your life always is, only that, only this. And that's facing reality. And people live with an accumulation of problems out from where they derive their identity, a me, it's a problematic me, because they never face reality.

But the mind says, oh, if I worry enough, I'm really facing reality. And you wake up at three in the morning and start facing reality. And of course, it's not reality.

The reality is your bed, your breathing, the aliveness of this moment, perhaps the stillness of the night. That is the reality. There is no problem at that moment.

Perhaps at nine o'clock in the morning, a problem will come in. The phone will ring, there

will be a voice at the other end. It can only happen in the now.

But the amazing thing is, it can never be a problem in the now. And it is faced completely in the now. But before you face challenges, which is all it is, problems are not problems, that is a mind construct, mental construct, in the mind's attempt to enhance its identity.

I have important problems. It's unconscious, of course. It never says that I am big because I have big problems.

So facing only the now, that's reality. Facing that in that sharp, it is sharp and gentle at the same time, that alert field. And there's always, there's a space there of no thought.

The moment you look, a problem appears in whatever form, let's say suddenly there's a big dog barking at you, and there's a space of no thought. You can't really measure it in terms of time, but let's say it's one second, two seconds, three seconds. And there's that alertness in which it's faced.

And then action arises. And nobody can predict what action arises, if action is needed. Or nothing, action may not be possible at this moment.

And then there's the simple allowing of this, the now, in whatever form it takes, to be. There is a spaciousness suddenly. And that is, in that spaciousness, your whole life unfolds, no longer as a problem, but you don't need them anymore.

You don't need the accumulation of problems anymore to give you a sense of self, because you are that, the spaciousness in which your whole life happens, in the now. That. So you bring that, when you walk in the forest here, you bring that alert attention, that spacious presence into your sense perceptions, the same alertness with which you pay attention to the gaps in the words, between the words.

And the essential thing that you can learn through nature, and this is an ideal environment for that, is, and this is, nothing is more important in your life than this, no matter what the mind says, learn to perceive through that alert stillness. You look at nature and you listen to the sounds of nature. And you then walk around like, as if you had just been born into this moment, or maybe if they just arrived on this planet, from somewhere else, how would you, if you had just been born into this now, you would look, oh, oh, everything is new, there's nothing or labels.

And you just use the beauty of nature all around you to go there, and when you walk, some of you may occasionally want to walk fast, just to get some exercise, but also walk slowly, so that you, your sight can, your sense perception can, your sense perception can spend a few seconds with each thing that you look at. And occasionally stop, perhaps even find one or two friends out here in nature, and during these days, you go back to that tree, or that bush, or that pond, or whatever it may be, or the river, and you

go back to it, and meet it each time, and you go back to it, and meet it in the state of alert stillness, in which there's no labeling, in which you, and you can then know what it means to know something without mind movement, a completely different way of knowing. When you are with a tree, or with a flower, or with a pool of water, or blades of grass, whatever it is, you know, you know that this is a tree, but you don't call it a tree. And you know it is far vaster than tree.

Tree was a label that reduced it, it gave the illusion that you actually knew what it was. Tree is only a sound, it's only a few letters put together. How can that be an exhaustive explanation?

Is that true knowledge of what this is? But even if you had more things, even if you had studied biology, or whatever, and you could write a PhD on that tree, it's still knowing about it, and yet it's not yet knowing it, which doesn't happen through mental labels. So that is, it's essential here to bring that into your perceptions.

So, and then there are always, there are two dimensions to your life. One is the dimension of whatever you perceive in the now, listen, look at, feel, and the other, of course that's the manifested dimension, the other is the unmanifested. And if I limit it the moment I put a word onto it, but I'm going to do it anyway, but you know every word is a limitation, I can ring this bell, and the sound when I ring this bell manifests, and it manifests to you as something audible, it's auditory perception, an experience you could say, when you listen to this sound which is beautiful, it becomes an experience, it's an auditory sense perception, and you could say you experience the sound, but that's only one dimension. Now for most people that's the only dimension they know, and they identify with the experience, with that manifested form.

In this case it's a sound. And if the whole week, if I were ringing these bells the whole week, you could say it was a beautiful experience, every day we listened to him ringing these beautiful bells continuously, and it was a nice, wonderful experience, that's the experience level. But that wouldn't be enough, because then you go away and then the bells are gone, or you would become dependent on more bells.

Now there's always to every experience and every sense perception there is an underlying dimension that most humans are not yet aware of, and they seek themselves in and through the experience of the sense perceptions, or they want to run away from it because it threatens their sense of self. So most humans are completely identified with the arising forms, auditory form, a sound, visual, billions of life forms, thought forms, thoughts, emotional forms, waves of emotion, they come and go. Now most humans then their sense of self either identifies with the form and wants to add it to me, or feels threatened by the form and wants to run away from it.

That's the reactive, personalized sense of self. And they look for themselves in the forms that arise, and that is not knowing who you are. So what is the dimension that usually

you will not be aware of?

What is there before the sound happens, and after the sound has subsided? Let's find out. We could say stillness.

We could say alert presence. No form in it, yet it's before the sound, just alert presence. And the sound happens, and even while you listen to the sound, you can be aware of the alert presence, the awareness in which it arises, which is there after it subsides.

That's you, consciousness. So this is your practice, knowing yourself as that, not that which arises, but this field in which it arises. And that field is infinitely intelligent.

It is the one intelligence, the one consciousness, and that liberates you from a narrow, personalized little sense of self, with its reactivity, its complaining, its good and bad and shouldn't, and reaching out always to the next moment to fulfill itself, missing the now, which is the field in which it all happens. So returning always to that, and in any experience that you have, any sense perception, be aware of not only the form, but also, one could say, the one in whom it arises. One could say, be aware of yourself, the I, not the little me, that underlies all sense perception, all thought, all emotion, all thought, all emotion.

So, many times during this week, you will find yourself being drawn into mind again, and then you notice it, and you step out into, back into now. And that shift is a wonderful thing once you know how easy that is, the shift from being out of the now, identified with mind, not here, and even during a conversation, you can be completely not here, because you're completely identified with your mental positions. And then, suddenly, there's a shift, which otherwise would only happen if you were suddenly faced with death, imminent death, then it could happen fairly easily, it can happen to people who've never heard of this, and the mind stops.

When faced with death, truly faced with death, the mind can't do anything anymore. And this applies to your own death, or even death close to you. Death is not the greatest disaster that ever happened, it's the greatest opening, too.

On the level of form, of course, death is the greatest disaster that could ever befall anybody, and we might as well kill ourselves now, because what's the point? On that level, of course, if that's it. Also death, somebody near you, but death needs to be faced, not explained away through more mind stuff, or finding theories around it.

Faced, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, and when death comes to you, the mind can't, and it sometimes happens through death, in whatever form, through disaster, the mind can no longer explain things. And that's facing death. It stops the mind.

Death stops the mind. And then, some people who faced death and they didn't die, they talked about it, ah, some shift happened inside me, there was this incredible serenity,

suddenly, and aliveness and peace, and all fear was gone, gone. And that is the shift here that you, this is a kind of death, too.

Just sitting here is facing death. Nothing real dies, but it can feel like death. And so, you enter death voluntarily during this week, and there's the shift from mind and me, and to suddenly the state of alert presence.

It also comes easily, there are various ways, we'll talk about this in more detail, but when, to simply put more attention into your sense perception, and perceptions is a first step, listening and hearing with alertness, such alertness that you are not labeling it. Oh, if you had to listen to a very distant sound, you'd have to listen so carefully that you couldn't be thinking other thoughts at the same time, and even the thought, can I hear it or can't I hear it, would prevent you from hearing it. The sound is so distant, it requires your total attention and alertness, and even tension in the body would prevent you, so it's an open, relaxed alertness, and you would be listening like, so sense perceptions bring alertness into sense perceptions, as if you were seeing this flower for the first time, and then after a while you sense the underlying alertness.

You can then look at a flower and close your eyes, it's gone. For a moment the image of flower still lingers in your mind, then that may be gone too, and it's simply a field of alive presence. So all these things I will be reminding you continuously, how to be here during these days, how to shift from mind to presence, and how to shift from mind to presence, and you will have to shift many times, because many times the mind will draw you back in, then stepping out, and you may observe that whenever the mind draws you back in, in some way it's a denial of this moment, you're running away from it internally, you're judging it, you're not facing it, you want to be in the next moment, perhaps you'd like to rather be, the mind says, why did I come here?

I live in a warm climate, and then why did I come here? I could be sitting in my backyard in Palm Springs, or wherever it is. Mind, and immediately you're back in mind movements, but you're here, and if you went back that moment, you would arrive the next day in Palm Springs, then you would be sitting in your backyard, and the mind would say, you see, you failed, that was an opportunity, you shouldn't have left, can't win.

So another way of shifting is a complete allowing of this moment to be as it is, and that includes things like maybe the shower is not free, and you're standing there, and wanting to get into the shower, but somebody's taking a long time in the shower, and there you are, a complete yes to this moment. Uncompromising yes, because what can you do? It is.

That also brings presence in very quickly, and you become, we will be talking, you become aware of an undercurrent when you allow this moment to be. Completely. That also is your practice here.

It's presence practice. Presence practice. Something in you loves that, and something in you hates that.

That's good to know too. That in you which loves it was strong enough to get you here. Maybe it was touch and go whether you would make it.

Maybe even shortly before leaving, something came up and said, well, do you really want to go? It'll be cold in late November, and he'll be talking about these things that I read about already in the book. Do you really want to?

It was touch and go. Something wants it, something doesn't want it. And what is it?

That which wants it is the mind made self, the me. Of course it doesn't want presence. And something deeper is arising that loves that.

Whenever you sit here and you love sitting here or being here, then that arises. Whenever you don't love being here, and not just here, anywhere, any here, whenever you don't, then the other is operating. It doesn't want to be here.

It wants to be in its own, its little world in the head, conceptualized universe and think about things and people and me and my life and my problems. Conceptualized universe in my head. And then peripherally I'm still aware of shadowy figures that are other people.

And then there's some greenery there, that's nature. And all the mind can do with that is to say, oh, I'd like to have that. Or that would look good in my backyard.

My backyard. I wonder how much five acres here would cost. Well, that's not as nice as the forest I saw five years ago.

It's mad, but nothing personal in it. So, we've been talking about how to be here. Strange way of putting it.

How to be here. Truly be here. And what that means.

The depth that is suddenly there when you are truly here. The depth that is in you. Whereas before there's a shallow little entity.

And suddenly there's an enormous depth. And it no longer matters how fulfilling this situation is. No situation is all that fulfilling for long.

Not for mostly, most situations are not very fulfilling. The external form of the situation is a depth far deeper than whatever form is here. The experience that you may be having comes and goes.

The depth of your being when you are here. And you've been looking for the reality of

yourself in the future through trying to get away from here. That's all the practice.

Here, completely here. And so when you're walking from here between your cabin completely, you're not trying to get to the cabin, but what are you going to do there? It's a strange realization that the next moment is not going to be better.

It's an illusion. When you don't know this moment fully, the next one is not going to be better. It can give you the illusion that it's better for a little moment.

And then, oh. And then you're sitting in the cabin. And then you go to bed alive.

Every cell alive. You dwell in the sense of your inner body. Occasionally a few thoughts come in and out completely unimportant.

Thoughts are not really that important. That's one of the things perhaps that you realize here. That thought is not that important.

It's functional. But it's not that important. Whatever the mind brings up, it says, yes, this is important.

This thought is important. You should be completely in this. It's not that important, thought.

It's a tool. It's a function. One of your many functions.

You can think. It's good. And so that's another thing to remember here.

And I may remind you a few times. Thoughts that come into your head during these days, some of them, many of them will pretend to be very important. But you know that they are not that important.

So you find a different relationship to your mind. It's not this big, everything. It's a different relationship to your mind.

And when I say it's not that important, it means it's not that serious. Thought wants to be taken seriously. And I sometimes say that at the beginning of retreats, especially, one of my favorite practices, or your favorite practice, it will become soon your favorite practice.

I often recommend it now. Don't take your mind too seriously, which means thought. Whatever thoughts come, another thought, a perspective.

The food is good. The food is bad. It's not as good as it was there.

Better than there. It's a perspective. This person looks more spiritual than me.

He is not spiritual at all. Why, he shouldn't even be here. Look.

What's he doing here? Another thought. It wants to be taken seriously, but it's not.

So that's a very nice practice, not taking your mind that seriously. It's a very light practice. And you start to laugh a lot.

When you laugh at your mind, that means enlightenment is happening. In some ways I have encapsulated all our practices already tonight here, so if you want to leave early, pressing business somewhere, a moment of stillness, thank you. I recommend you just stay for just maybe a few minutes in this field.

Remember to go into sleep, sensing your inner body as you lie on your bed. Maybe keep words to a minimum for the rest of the evening. Also reading.

Don't escape into a book. There's no TV here, so you can't escape into that. The weather is ideal, of course, for a retreat.

In some Buddhist countries where they have rainy seasons, in Southeast Asia, they go on a rains retreat every year, called the rains. Not much else to do anyway. The simplicity of the moment of the now, this moment, the sound of the rain, the sense of presence or aliveness within and without stillness.

A strange characteristic of the now is that it has a sacredness to it. A sacredness that's, of course, the essence of who you are, because you and the field of now are inseparable. You don't know anything of it, but the now is obscured to you.

Any now, even the now of death, somebody dies close to you, there's a sacredness when your attention moves into the field of now. As it does so, aliveness rises throughout your entire being, and there's an openness. And then you notice there's an essence to the now that's sacred, and I don't want to explain or further define what that is, because you know what sacred is.

It's not separate from who you are. The mind may not know what it is and may demand further explanations. You can know it at this moment, you can know at first hand directly without need for further analysis or evidence or concepts that there is an essence to the now that's sacred.

Not just this now, the now, it doesn't matter what form the now takes, it's not just sacred. It's sacred here, it feels perhaps more sacred than downtown, wherever. But if you went to that downtown, and you could enter the now totally there in the midst of the noise and the traffic and the fumes, because you may not be able to, there's no silence externally, so you cannot enter the now through silence.

You enter the now downtown through a complete yes to that now. And then there's an underlying stillness within you, noise all around, and the alertness is there too, and there's nothing inside that demands that this should be different. Does that mean you're

not going to change the world?

No, that's how you change the world. Because the externalized downtown and the traffic noise is an externalization of the human mind and its noise. It's mind made.

All the machinery is mind made. That's okay. As humans live in a different state of consciousness and dwell in the depth that is beyond mind, the world that they create will reflect that, just as the world that they created in the past few hundred or thousand years reflects an inner state.

And that becomes human history, the madness of it. It's continuously a new chapter. New chapters are being added, even now, continuously to the madness of that human history.

Externalization of an inner state, collective inner state. It's always easy to see the mad people are out there, but the core of madness is identification with mental noise and mind and mental images of me. And then you start fighting others to strengthen your identity.

So one could say, if you're comfortable with that word, I don't use it very often, you can only find God in this moment. God meaning the essence, the one life, the one consciousness out of which the many forms of life are born. Ultimately, of course, yourself, the essence of who you are is not separate from the essence of the universe.

So you can only know yourself deeply beyond mental constructs as you enter the field of now. And you can test it for yourself just to find out, let's see if this now is also sacred. But surely not this one.

But then you have to, if it seems it's impossible for this now, surely it cannot be sacred. Remember one little thing, say yes to this now that appears to surely not this now sacred and don't resist it. And immediately the resisting entity, you go beyond the resisting entity, which is the mind made self, which lives in and through resistance to the suchness of this moment.

And the depth reveals itself and that depth is sacred. That is the depth of now beyond what happens in the now. Those are forms that come and go.

The depth of now is the depth of your very being, is pure consciousness. And that is, how can that not be there? It's always there, except when you are in reactivity to the form that this now takes.

Then your own form identity gets strengthened and contracts even more. And then you look on everything as a little form identity and you look on everything through the eyes of and from the perspective of fear and desire. The form wants to add certain things to make itself bigger and fears other things that might diminish it.

Nothing else really this week here is your practice except re-entering the now whenever you lost it. Or in other words, it has become obscured to you. What happens when you lose that?

You don't lose it, it becomes obscured, but it is as if you had lost the now. You become identified with mental constructs and a conceptualized sense of self. Your whole life situation obscures the aliveness, the vitality, the power that is in the now.

It's here now. And you carry the burden of a mental construct and identity built on a mental construct and me, which is my life situation with the past and all the problems and the continuity of this problematic past in a problematic future. And the now is totally obscured by the mental construct that you carry, the burden of that.

And so you sit and you are totally absorbed by your life situation by the conceptualized mental identity, a me. And you miss that which has enormous power even to deal with all the problems that you think you have and are inseparable from who you are. That's what the belief is.

The now would immediately deal with them and reveal the fictitious and illusory nature of many of them. If they are real problems, they are a challenge that is in your life now. So it's the little thing is removing in any situation that you find yourself in, find the simplicity of that situation rather than carry the burden of past and future.

Here you are sitting on a bus going to an appointment with your attorney to declare bankruptcy. One possible situation. People encounter situations like that in their life.

Now that moment could be if you are, your identity is in a mental construct, a me, and your life at that moment has come to an end. It's, I can't face this. Years of work, all for nothing, and my wife has left me.

On top of all that, a fictitious situation, but it happens. The stories that go through your head, what you are telling yourself about your life, how dreadful it is, and you're, of course, surely not going to make it now. You might as well end it.

Fear, loathing, self-loathing, and what is the situation when you remove the mental construct that you carry? You're sitting on a bus. The seat is soft.

Breathing is happening. You're looking out of the window. There go trees go past.

There's the sky, and the body is alive too. It's a great aliveness, energy field. There's an energy field of presence perceiving through that stillness that is presence the world as it goes past, the world of form, and the bus is moving, and this moment is good.

Not because you're convincing yourself mentally it really, it's good. It's because you step out of the mental judgments, and you know the goodness of this moment, but it's more

than the, the appearance is quite harmless without the story. Here's a body sitting in a seat, and perceiving the traffic or the trees, and it's not, it's neither bad nor good.

It's just a simple situation, and you, but your complete yes to that takes you even deeper to a deep sense of aliveness that has nothing to do with what stage your, your conceptualized identity in the head is at, up or down. And that, so it frees you, it's freedom from being trapped and deriving your sense of self from a life situation, which is a conceptualized image, mental image thing in me that needs to make it. Sometimes thinks it can make it, or sometimes think it has made it, and then didn't.

Or here you are, sitting, a slightly softer seat, in your own big car, driving to an appointment with the attorney to sign another million billion dollar deal. The difference is the seat is a little softer, there's a bit more air coming through, the same things are going past the window, but you can derive some, you can tell yourself that story in your head, I have made it. Another billion dollar deal is going to be signed.

And after a little while you find, when it's your fifth billion dollar deal, that, that story that you tell yourself in your head about who you are, becomes a bit stale. And then you think, well, maybe I should try another car, this one. Or try another wife.

Sooner or later, the conceptualized identity is not satisfying. And the point comes when it becomes very unsatisfying, to live in and through telling yourself a story of who you are, and getting others to confirm it, that you are right, so you get the recognition and the status. Yes.

And that becomes stale too. Because you still don't know, you live through a mental construct. And you miss that.

So both, let's see these two men, maybe it's the same man at different times, going to an appointment, one on a bus has lost everything, one in a big car has just gained everything. Both ultimately will encounter that situation is unsatisfactory. It is perhaps more, who knows who is going to, who will step out of a conceptualized identity first, or sooner.

The one who has lost everything, or the one who has gained everything, and doesn't find it fulfilling anymore. Because he can't find himself, no matter what stories he tells himself, in the head, there's still fear. There's still restlessness, discontent, and suffering, in one form or another.

So it is vital, no matter what your life situation is, to know how to step out of identification with that, and experience at first hand, the now. And it's deeper than an experience. The experience is the form that the now takes.

What is beyond experience is the depths of now. The stillness underneath the forms through which you perceive the forms. And this is important to do it here, because as

you walk about here, in between our gatherings here, you walk from one building to another, or you walk into the hot tub, and out of the hot tub, and to the dining hall.

Sometimes you will be walking as that mental construct, thinking, and then you ask yourself, well, this situation doesn't really, why am I here? The now rarely fits into the mental construct. Or you can walk as a field of alive, alert presence.

And they become very simple, of course, in that state. But also intelligent. It's just this moment, walking, moving, sitting, breathing.

And so that is a dimension, that is a dimension of depths that now becomes revealed. The moment itself may seem not important enough. It doesn't contain that much.

There's no, the externals of any moment are not that, they're nice forms sometimes, but nothing lasts for that long. Stepping out of the mental concepts of who you think you are into now, when you no longer know who you are, and yet you do now, but not through concepts. And then, can one live in that way, that you spend more time in that vital aliveness, or can you only practice this on retreats?

Is it possible to live like that in a mind-dominated world out there? Is it possible to be in the now as you're driving to an appointment with your attorney, either to pick up a \$10 million check or declare bankruptcy? Or is there too much stress for you?

And of course it is possible in any moment to be in the moment, without demanding that this moment should be different. And then some, a greater power begins to operate through you. That's the power of the unconditioned consciousness.

So that is your practice here. And recognize when you lose yourself in identification with life's situation and a sense of self derived from a conceptualized mental construct. And you have to then tell yourself that story to remind yourself who you are.

Problems, oh yeah, and next week, and then that. Now here, you've seen how important it is. This is not just, it's not a, it goes far beyond the personal to step out of a narrow personalized sense of self.

It's a huge transformation that happens in human consciousness. It's not a, you don't do it for yourself. Human consciousness, there's great urgency now for that transformation.

Not urgency in the sense of we need to get there as soon as we have, urgency in the sense of intensity. There's great, the intensity with which presence arises in many human beings now, not yet the majority on the planet, they need more suffering. That's their spiritual teacher.

Just as suffering has been your spiritual teacher for some years, and mine, that was my greatest teacher. Really the only teacher I had that took me to liberation was suffering.

So many humans still have suffering as their teacher.

In others, in whom there is openness, presence is already arising. And with more and more intensity, because humankind would not survive for that long if human consciousness remained unchanged. So as you continuously get drawn back into that, you step, when you notice it, you notice it as restlessness, unease, anxiety, fear, past, future, judgment in the mind with which you identify, discontent, an absence rather than a presence.

Then you notice it, and you step back into now. I recommend three little things that can help you step back into now as in these days, and at any time. One I mentioned last night, sense perceptions.

Become more acutely aware of seeing, the main sense perceptions are for seeing and hearing. Become more alert to what you see, because most humans are not at all alert to their sense perception, because most of their attention is in thought. Sense perceptions are peripheral to thought, sometimes totally obscured by thought.

They don't even know where they are. There's so much in their mind. Or you could talk to them and they don't even hear you.

What did you say? Oh, I wasn't, I was thinking. Where are we?

Where am I? How did I get here? I don't know, I've been thinking.

So you step out by bringing attention to sense perceptions, and this is particularly helpful in nature. It's beautiful to do that, but you could do it anywhere. And there's an alertness.

That alertness is the arising of presence, and thought will slow down, because attention to sense perceptions does not mean attention to the ways in which you label sense perceptions. It means direct attention to sense perceptions. Direct seeing, not the intermediary of mind through which you see and say, oh, what a pretty white flower.

What's it called? I can't remember. Oh, yes, carnation.

My mother used to grow them in her garden. Maybe I should have them in my garden, too. They would look nice.

I wonder if there are other colors available in my local shop. There was perhaps half a second in which you saw it, and then mind came in. So to stay, this is one way of stepping out, bringing attention to sense perceptions.

Hearing, listening. If you're in a hot tub, you can sense, feel. The body will come to that.

And so that requires a certain alertness, and that is one way of stepping out of thought.

Alertness arises the moment you become, and then you stay with something for just a little while. Then you look around in the state of alertness, and you listen, perhaps as a sound of rain, or the river, or other sounds.

You listen. You watch. And soon you notice, you get a sense of beyond that which you see or listen to, there's the field of alertness, still alert presence.

And that which you see, or that which you listen to, beautiful as it may be, becomes almost secondary, in fact, becomes secondary to the alert presence through which you see it, through which you hear it. And that's why you could go, when you've done it here in nature, the alert presence can arise in the middle of L.A. or New York, in the middle of the city, in the middle of external noise, and its stillness. You're beginning to find yourself there.

You're touching a depth that is beyond the person, beyond the person. So, here, whenever you lose yourself in mind, you notice it because in some form some suffering will come in, even if it's just minor suffering, unease, boredom. Boredom is a minor form of suffering.

What's next? Oh, another day here, it's raining. Nothing interesting to do except the hot tub, but I can't go there all the time.

What are we going to do tonight? Oh, nothing. Oh, I wonder.

And then you get out your calendar and count, okay, three more days. It's a minor form of suffering, not usually recognized as suffering. Just as before, you looked at your calendar and you said, three more weeks to the retreat.

And when you notice it, alert. Come back into now. How?

Now, at that moment when you know you lost yourself in mind, there will be a little voice that says, no, can't do it now. It's too much going on in my head. I just can't do it.

I know he's talking about these things, but I just, I really can't do it now. That voice is thought wanting to continue. And you don't need to believe that it says, oh, I can't do it.

When you hear the voice that says, I can't do it now, not now. I don't want the now now. Maybe later.

At that moment you can see, that's the thought, and then you do it anyway. Alert. And you watch.

Oh, step out of mind. Okay. So that's sense perceptions.

We'll be speaking about this continuously. And another little device for stepping out of thought, it's been used for thousands of years in spiritual practices. Am I breathing?

And the moment you know you're breathing, you're in the now. To sense yourself breathing, the inflow and outflow of breath, you're in the now. It takes you into the now.

That becomes, so one anchor for now is sense perception. Sense perceptions. Another anchor for now is breathing, breath awareness.

And that is a beautiful thing, to become friendly with your breath. There's a universal rhythm there of arising, flowering, fulfillment, and subsiding and dying. The in-breath is like birth.

Maturity is the end of the in-breath, and then you go into, towards death as you begin to breathe out. The end of the out-breath, each end of the out-breath is a little death. So you can follow the breath with your attention.

It moves in, and out. That's always there. And it takes you into now.

The Buddha is reported to have said that if you can observe your breathing for one hour, or something, I don't know if they had hours then, but some time measurement equivalent probably to an hour. If you can observe your breath for one hour, you will be liberated forever. If you can be present with your breath for one hour, but you don't need to do that.

Just this one breath. If you miss one breath, you have to start all over again. The hour starts always, if you miss one breath in the 59th minute, you start again.

Not long ago, or I don't know when, somebody showed me, it was some spiritual organization that offered a program of so many courses you could take. You could go to a week-long conference, and every day, or every two hours, you could book a different course of this and that. All kinds of practices, ancient and modern, a huge, what's that expression, smorgasbord of stuff that you can pick and choose from here and there, and it looked fascinating.

Somebody showed it to me and said, which one should I choose? They said, this one week thing, or two week thing, I can choose, there's so many, can you advise me? I said, if you spend that time observing your breath, that will be more useful.

And so many things, make so many things. If you can stay with one thing, that's fine, but eventually it'll take you to presence. If there's any reality in any practice, eventually, sooner or later, hopefully sooner, it will take you to this, to presence, the arising of presence, whether it's body work, or whatever practice, even counseling, if you go to counseling, eventually, if it works, there is presence, the counselor is there in a state of open alert attention, and a field of presence arises, and then it begins to work. Sometimes presence is hidden underneath a certain practice, and the essence of the practice is presence. And in a way here, we address presence very directly, without going, I love all those many practices, they are beautiful, because the essence is there.

But it happens that here, we go there very directly, even without movement, there's the essence of presence when you learn Tai Chi, these beautiful, slow movements. Of course, you cannot be good at Tai Chi if you're not present. If you're thinking beforehand, when your arm is here, that it's traveling to this point, and you're already there while the arm is still here, you're in the future while the arm is still in the present, you're not good at Tai Chi.

You're trying to get somewhere, to the end of that movement. To be a master at Tai Chi, and I don't know anything about Tai Chi, I just know presence, is to be there at every stage of the movement, to be at no stage of this movement of the arm, is a means to getting to the next point. The moment is not a means to an end, a future end, which is the mind condition, that reduces every moment to a means to an end of getting to the next moment.

And there's the movement of the hand, and your attention is there at every point, every moment, now, now. And so presence arises when you watch a Tai Chi master, you sense that there's a power there, there's a presence there, and it arises through that movement. And of course, how did it all start?

Did somebody think that up, all these movements? They think, okay, now we're going to design body movements. Did they form a committee, two, three thousand years ago in China, and got together and said, let's design body movements that bring about presence.

Okay. Nobody knows how Tai Chi started. I know that it started as spontaneous movement by somebody in presence, dwelling in presence, and suddenly the body started to move as a joyous expression of that inner state.

The body went into spontaneous, very slow dance, and some people around were amazed and looked at it and could feel something, and then a little later that person did it again. And more people came and started watching, and it felt good to be around that field of presence. And a little while later, somebody came with a piece of paper, whatever they had to write on at the time, and started taking notes.

We must learn this. This is good. Let's write down what he's doing now.

He's lifting his left arm. And just before it goes up completely, the right foot goes up. Let's write it down.

And now the whole body starts to move. Write it down. So gradually it became a system.

Originally it originated as spontaneous movement, as a joyous expression of presence. Then it became a system. But the strange way, the strange thing is, even as a system, you start at the other end, rather than arising from within as an expression of presence, you start by moving.

It still works. So even the movement, it's no longer the original spontaneous beauty of it, but perhaps with master, spontaneity does come in. I don't know enough about Tai Chi.

So that's a practice. There are many practices, and the essence of it, if you look, you will find presence arises through it. So breath.

Observe your breath. Feel your breath. Feel yourself breathing.

Slow. And breathing is not interesting, just as our retreat is not interesting to the mind. So you go beyond interesting or not interesting.

Breathing is boring to the mind. It wouldn't want to stay with that for very long. Well, I've been observing now my breath for one minute.

What now? And then, OK, I'll do another minute. So also you can pay attention to the end of the in-breath and the end of the out-breath.

There's always a point of cessation there. The end of the out-breath before the end of the out-breath is the death. A deep stillness there.

And you breathe in. There's also a point of cessation as you stop breathing in before starting to breathe out again. You can also bring the two practices together that I just described.

Attention to sense perceptions and at the same time, attention to your breathing. When we go more into silence here and even have silent meals very soon, that will be very helpful to be with your breathing as you sit there and eat and look at other people and feel yourself breathing. And you will notice when you feel yourself breathing, you can actually look at things without needing to label them.

And you do that, when you look upon a human being in that way, that's the beginning of love, true love. Very different from what the ego, it doesn't look like love from the ego point of view. But the beginning of true love is simply to look upon another human being without any thought, label, judgment.

You allow that person to be totally in that clear space of presence. And you suddenly know that person beyond form, a deeper knowing to which knowledge of form would add nothing to the depth of that knowing. I sometimes meet people only for 10 seconds, perhaps in a hug.

Look, we meet, we talk, we hug, we look at each other, and there's a hug. With very large gatherings, I can't hug anymore. It takes hours to hug 500 people.

But it's beautiful, there's a brief moment of, and I know the depth of that being, just as I know myself, to which if I ask, what do you do for a living, no knowledge on that level could add anything to it. If you can bring this state that is arising from within you here

into your human interactions, as you bring it into your perception of nature, which is easier to bring it in there than into human interactions, but it is vital then as presence, enough presence is in you, you can bring it into human interactions. And look upon another human being in the same way that you look upon a flower in a state of alert attention or spaciousness.

And when you look, you sense the spaciousness, you sense the alert, the field of attention as your reality and as the other person's reality, and there you meet. Otherwise, you only meet through mind. So that is vital, and you change the world very quickly in that way, through bringing in that, because the good news is, it spreads, presence transmits itself.

It's not just a feeling, it is recognized by others, it is loved by others who temporarily might love you as the form and think you are very special, so they might be drawn to you as the form, but what they love is they can be more fully themselves when they're close to you. Why? Because there's a spacious presence when they enter that field.

It feels good to be in that field, and then it is, it awakens from within. It only requires the slightest opening in another human being. Many humans have heavy layers of mental noise covering up the unconditioned consciousness, the depth of who they are underneath that.

But in quite a few humans, there is now already a crack has appeared in the density, and all it requires is a little opening and something within will respond to presence and recognize presence, even though they may not know what it is. And there may still be, there are other humans whose emotional, mental emotional layers are too dense, and even when they are in the presence of the Buddha, they could live with the Buddha for a year and nothing would happen. So this is vital to bring it also into, not just, really when you interact with humans, you don't very often get a chance in normal everyday life to be still together.

You can't go to the office and say, unless you're in a very enlightened office, and say, okay, let's be still together for a moment. You don't need to do that even. Bring the stillness into the listening.

Whenever you listen, be the alert field of attention that is listening, not the person that is listening and at the same time thinking and judging and thinking what I'm going to say next, preparing your next sentence or preparing your argument or disagreeing in the mind. Listen. Just listen in that field of open attention.

And you can do it here. Listen, somebody else is speaking. It's just the listening.

Just as you listen to the sounds of nature, you listen to the sounds of the human voice. And if necessary, you may have to observe your breathing while you listen, because

otherwise the mind may get drawn into noise. So we have as anchors for presence, alertness to sense perceptions.

We have observing your breathing, which requires the same alertness, the same wakefulness. And you'll notice the moment you get drawn back into mind, you lose the breath. The moment you're aware of breath again, the mind stops.

At this moment, there's the sound of the rain and there's your breathing. From the point of view of the mind, that is certainly not interesting, at least not for long. And yet if you stay with that, you go beyond interesting or not interesting to a greater depth of intense aliveness and sacredness of this moment.

This moment, you're breathing and you're listening to the rain. It's enough. Do you need more?

What for? What can you add to this? You're breathing and you're listening to the rain.

And there's something else. And that you cannot define through words, but I call it the underlying presence. That's where the sacredness resides.

The sacredness isn't as such in the sound of the rain. It's deeper than that. The sound happens within that sacred space of now.

Your breathing happens within the sacred space of now. So it has been said, there's no spot where God is not, which of course means there's no now where God is not. There's no physical place where God is not, because whenever you go there, it's now.

So to have access to that dimension, regardless of your life situation, regardless of whether next week you are going to declare bankruptcy or pick up a \$10 million check, regardless of even whether your body is going to live for another 50 years or another six months, regardless of gain or loss, up or down, you have access to that, you have access to that now, not before something happens or after something has happened. And it is not the case that you are not facing your life situation when you pay attention to this one thing, the only thing that matters in your life.

The mind tells you, you're not dealing with it. You're not dealing with all your things. That is dealing with it.

And you will find that even your life situation, as it unfolds in the dimension of time, on the surface of things, there's time, you will find incredible changes happening there too, because you now have access to that dimension of depth. And that shines through the externals of your life situation. The depths that you now know yourself to be, when I say you have access to it, it's not quite right, the depths that you are, then shines through even your life situation.

Somehow there's a light that shines through. What does that mean when I say that? It means that this man who is traveling on a bus to an appointment with his attorney to declare bankruptcy has access to that, and then he steps into the attorney's office and everything happens with ease.

He signs a few papers. He goes away on another bus. Then he goes back home.

Perhaps his mansion is lost. He goes to a little room. And there he sits, looks out of the window, breathes, and there's intense aliveness, intense presence, great goodness to this moment.

And then out of that action arises. He suddenly finds himself getting up or going to the phone, taking a step, walking from here to there, perhaps getting a job. And the next day he's flipping hamburgers.

Or he's working in a restaurant as a waiter. Can I help you? What would you like?

And his present. And two weeks later one of the customers is so overcome by the waiter's presence that he offers him a job as financial administrator. Now wait for the next installment.

Helpful things come in when there's presence. I experienced that in my life, and I was amazed by it when I spent some time on park benches and I had lost interest in future because presence was so blissfully alive that no future moment could possibly be better. So I don't recommend that to you, but it happened.

And yet miraculously things came. The last minute somebody would offer me money, offer me a place to stay for a few days, offer me a part-time job once or twice. Always last minute a helpful factor comes in, and that came to somebody who didn't even move, and I don't advocate that.

I didn't have anybody to tell me that yes, you can be in the state of presence, but you can still move and do things. And you move beautifully and what you do in that state is much more powerful than what you do when you need the end result to fulfill you as a personal me. What if it doesn't work out?

There's a fear and that motivates you then. And even when you get what you want, you'll be just as miserable. So there's when you access that dimension, that then shines through even the external circumstances of your life.

It's not that you completely dismiss the external circumstances irrelevant, and that has been done in spiritual life too by practitioners. There were people in medieval times in Europe, and even now in India and certain countries who totally reject the external world, the phenomenal universe, because it's all illusion, I want nothing to do with it. And so they go, they stay in a cave or somewhere and don't move for years, or only walk a

few steps or some, and reject all that as illusion.

You could do that, but that's not quite, there is still, there's something, there's a no somewhere there. Include the phenomenal universe, embrace it, knowing full well that nothing out there as such is going to fulfill you, not for long. And simply dropping the demand that the world should fulfill you, that you have a right to be fulfilled by circumstances, situations, places, or people.

How frustrating to move through life continuously demanding that circumstances, situations, places, or people should fulfill you. And they don't, except for brief moments, and realizing that no matter where you go and who you meet, ultimately that in itself is not going to fulfill you. That relationship may be beautiful, but in itself is, if the deeper dimension of a being is not accessed, the relationship in itself will not fulfill you.

Or that wonderful place that you go to, that tropical island, if the dimension of depth has not been found and accessed within yourself, the tropical island is not going to fulfill you. For a little while it feels good, and after a few weeks you get extremely bored and restless. Is that all?

And it's sunny every day, can't stand it anymore. Circumstances, whatever it is, and you can, it's wonderful to see it, and when you see it, you don't demand that these things should fulfill you. They simply are as they are.

And so there's the, you're fulfilled already. And then the circumstances, situations, places, and people are quite pleasant, almost fulfilling. But you're fulfilled already.

Only because you're fulfilled already do you now see places, circumstances, and people as fulfilling. It doesn't matter where you're fulfilled here, whether it's rainy or sunny, it's nice, very nice, beautiful. And in the middle of a big city, it's okay.

You might not choose to spend 10 hours in meditation in the middle of the traffic, or you might, just because you enjoy it, or you might choose to live in the country. But while you're in the city, it's fine. So if you demand that, if you demand it that this situation here should fulfill you, and provide totally satisfying experience, that would take you into suffering.

First, no place does that. Or if it did it, it would come to an end, and then you would go, oh my God, it's gone. Are you still breathing?

Yes. Is it still the now? Yes.

And another anchor for presence, of course, is the inner body, to sense the aliveness. And the breath can take you into the inner body. Feel, sense, there's the outer body, you can touch it.

That already takes you a little bit out of mind, just touching the body, your body or somebody else's body, because it brings you to direct perception, just as looking, listening. And there's touching, you can touch, there's the outer body. Even that touch takes you a little bit, when you pay complete attention to the touch, takes you out of mind, out of thought, just this, just that.

But now we go deeper, there's an indwelling aliveness throughout the body, that you cannot sense, you cannot feel, when your attention is only in thought, in the head. It's in your feet, it's in your hands, it's in your legs, your arms, subtle, but it's there. It's so, it's beautifully alive.

And you can feel that in the background, even as you sit here with your eyes open, hearing, listening, you sense the background of aliveness. You dwell in there. You might even feel you're breathing at the same time, because these practices are not separate from each other.

Because we are bringing them together here, you're looking, sense perception, sense your breathing, and the depths of aliveness in your body, and you rest in that. And suddenly, there are no more problems. In that state of consciousness, there is no room for problems.

And you don't need them anymore to add to your serious identity, a heavy identity. Of course, next week you may encounter challenges, but only in the now, it'll be the now. And you face them in the now.

Not in a reactive way anymore, through mental reactivity, but with the depths of who you are, you face the now, and the challenge of the now. So the challenge doesn't turn into a problem. Problem means there's an identity, mentally constructed identity around a perceived challenge.

Or the projection of what might become a challenge, fiction. If there's a true challenge, it will heighten your sense of presence. Or if you face death as the ultimate challenge, you will die in blissful presence.

The flowering has happened. The flowering of consciousness has happened. When did it happen?

Well, maybe not in some people, it happens a few minutes before they die. It doesn't matter. Or it happens now, here, as you die psychologically to the mind made self.

The flowering of consciousness happens here. It's a joyous death. Of course, we will have time this week for questions, if they arise, questions that are vital and alive.

We are also going to move into, slowly, into more silence, even as we move about here. Slowly. I recommend we start this afternoon, after lunch, when you walk out of the

dining hall, to enter a period of noble silence, as the Buddha called it, until the beginning of dinner.

Of course, we'll meet here. I may be talking, who knows. But the rest of the afternoon we'll spend in silence.

Tomorrow we'll perhaps extend the silence a little bit, even to one or two mealtimes, into the night, and so on, being with others in silence at first, unless you're an old hat at retreats, and maybe have been to many retreats already that are far more demanding in terms of discipline and structure than this one. If you haven't been to many or any retreats, to be in silence with a group of people may seem disconcerting at first, just like stepping into an elevator and there are two people in the elevator, and it's a long way down or up, and you wonder you should be saying something. There's an unease when you're facing another human being in complete silence.

So usually one person can't stand it anymore after half a minute in the elevator and somebody says something about the weather or whatever. And then you become, suddenly an ease comes, you can be at ease without the need to speak, you can connect silently, you can practice it in an elevator, but you'll be practicing perhaps tomorrow here too, just being there. No need, or should be, that unease goes with silence.

And of course you've met many people, I'm sure everyone knows some, who can't tolerate a moment of silence, they need to talk, almost everybody in a conversation. And again, that will change now in you, not that you make another person feel uncomfortable, but you can relax into stillness. One more little hint to practice here.

While there's not silence, you may be talking to someone, speaking. Have some awareness if possible of, as you speak, of the mindstream and the energy that is behind the words that come out of your mouth. Be aware of how once there is a mindstream, the mindstream does not want to come to an end, it wants to grow further.

So how in a conversation sometimes one thing leads to another, somebody's talking, and then after 15 minutes they say, oh how did I get to this? We started off from there, and now how did I get from our starting point to this? It was a proliferation of mind, a mindstream.

So when you speak, you express an opinion, just an opinion of course, not the ultimate truth. You express an opinion, come to the end of the mindstream, express it, let it finish. Step back into stillness.

After you've said what you have to say, step back into stillness. Otherwise the mindstream will drag you along. So always speaking and stepping back.

And then you're listening or just being. It's so easy to get caught in mindstreams, enormous momentum behind it. And then once you're identified with it, God, the

momentum that's behind it then because it's your very sense of self is in it now.

And the force behind your arguments, the force behind your opinions is now enormous because your sense of self is invested in it. And of course you believe you're talking the absolute truth. You believe that one statement can encapsulate the truth about the universe, or another human being, or a place, or a situation.

And you're completely in that. And should anybody dare to challenge it, you'll be in it even more strongly. That's identified with mindstreams.

So stepping. Sometimes people ask me some very intelligent questions. I make certain statements.

I might say, this is the play of form. The universe is the play of form. This is not the ultimate truth.

And somebody says, how do you know it's a play of form? It could be something completely different. I'm sure it is.

It's many things. How could one statement encapsulate the totality? One little fragment, one little thought, a few sounds coming out of your mouth could encapsulate the totality.

Just a little. We are not here, fortunately, this is not philosophy, so we are not here to explain the universe. And all statements are just little helpful pointers towards a state of consciousness in which you no longer demand to know what cannot be known on the level of mind through thought.

And you realize the relativity of all thought. Breathing, sitting, being here in the body, alert. So after lunch, I recommend noble silence.

Now of course, there's no guarantee that there will be noble silence in your head. Noble silence externally. The head is another matter.

If there's no noble silence in your head, don't demand that there should be noble silence in your head, and there isn't. That creates just more mental noise. Just realize that it's not that serious.

No thought is that serious. It doesn't matter that much. Mental noise?

Okay. And occasionally you may find yourself wanting suddenly to focus on breath, on sense perception. Then you get taken over again by mental noise.

For a moment you can't get out. At least it's telling you that you can't, and very often you can. Stage for just maybe two or three minutes in the field, or however long you want to be here in that field, with the empty chair, just as good as with somebody sitting on it.

Better, in fact. Thank you. What a wonderful time for silent retreat.

Fall or autumn is like the out-breath. Nature is breathing out, and the out-breath can take you deep into death, but only the death of forms. All the leaves that look so beautiful and wonderful, their colors, they're all dying in this great beauty there.

And if you walk through a forest and you see a very large part of the aliveness of the forest is forms that are undergoing death. There's no separation between life and death. When you go through an ancient forest, there are many, many things, fallen trees, leaves, branches, dying, and yet that gives life to the forest.

That makes up its aliveness. So this autumn is a beautiful time, very conducive to going beyond form, because many natural forms in this northern climate at the onset of winter, many natural forms undergo dissolution. Nothing really dies.

But it is, it can be compared to the out-breath. And if you really pay attention, when you pay attention to your breathing, you really pay attention to the out-breath and follow it with your attention to the end, and there's that point at the end that is deeply peaceful and alive. And that's the aliveness that is in death, because every out-breath is a mini-death.

So the amazing thing is, if you go into death consciously, that's immediately the realization that there is no death. And then that is what Jesus called eternal life, which is the life beyond form, which is your essence. So nature is breathing out right now.

And that can take you very deep. You can almost say that you are breathing out. You can sense that out-breath all around you.

And the mind calls it bad weather. And compares it to some other day when it was sunny, or some other place where it is sunny now. And if it were only that, and then it continues complaining, that leads to another complaint, and another.

And you miss all that. Nobody has put forward this theory, but I'll do it. Relatively few people have become liberated from mind and mind forms in God.

And that is good weather. Now of course we can extend good weather, what that means. Yes, weather in the conventional sense of the word, but also good weather and bad weather, metaphorically speaking, as your life situation.

Because as you go through life, you also enter periods of bad weather. The mind calls it that. And those are the times when some exhalation happens in your life.

Something dissolves. Something leaves you. Some kind of death.

Something happens. And here the mind jumps in and says, bad, bad. Because the mind is form.

Thought forms make up the mind. It cannot look beyond form. So anything that doesn't look good on the level of form, the mind calls bad.

So the mind, and with it, the mind-identified entity, the me, is afraid of that badness, which it calls bad. The reality is far faster. In the reality, the distinction good-bad isn't there.

You may remember I quoted something from a Shakespeare play. Nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. Thought makes it so.

In itself it is not. Hundreds of years ago he wrote that. He had never read any Buddhism.

Hadn't reached England yet. And then we have an interesting thing, good or bad, at the beginning of the Bible. What happened when they lost Eden, which I'm told the original meaning of the Garden of Eden is the place of joy.

They ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, good and bad. They ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. Thought started coming in.

And suddenly there was good and bad. It had to come in. It was necessary.

But it itself wasn't bad either. And then a long, long time passed until humans became completely lost in thought and derived their identity exclusively from thought, no longer from the deeper level of being. And that also is only bad from one particular perspective, not from a higher perspective of the totality.

It is an evolutionary journey. We are moving out of thought now. It was an interesting journey.

And so when you relinquish good and bad, calling it, then you embrace both polarities. And even that takes you out of thought. Simply embracing different, seemingly opposite perspectives takes you out of thought.

And so here we see spring isn't good and fall is bad. It's an absurd separation that makes you lose the place of joy, the garden of Eden. And then there's a strange saying in the Bible, and there's another tree.

And God said they mustn't eat of that one. I don't think he said that or she said that. The tree of life.

So humans have been eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad for a long, long time. And now it's time to eat of the tree of life, the life beyond form, the one life that you are. And when you contemplate the exhalation of nature or any other exhalation in your life, whether it's the actual exhalation as your outgoing breath or the exhalation of loss in your life or dissolution of something, death, one form or another, and let it be, face it in a state of open acceptance, it takes you into deep peace and

aliveness.

And the mind has come to a stop. Sometimes through disaster it comes to a stop. This is a dental death, nature for very gentle.

And that's why it's so important to be out there or anywhere in here, but let's talk about nature, in a state of non-interpretation, labeling, the perception, clear, unadulterated perception, unadulterated perception. Untainted by thought as you contemplate a tree or a flower or the totality of your surroundings, trees, pool, steaming water, steam rising. You can pay attention to individual forms.

You can also pay attention to the entire field when you walk around, I don't mean a literal field, the entire spaciousness, the whole of a forest or the space, the natural space here. One could say you pay attention to the space around things and inner space arises, spaciousness, which is a state of no thought. And thoughts will come in occasionally, but you don't attach importance to them.

So you continue to be aware of, as you go into nature, clear perception. And as we're more and more going to have silent meals, let your sense perception flow into the taste, taste the food. Just as you look at a flower, you taste the food, you eat in awareness, and then there's the food, and there's the awareness in which it happens.

The taste occurs as an experience. And the awareness is you, the sense of presence. And then, and this is a very important practice, especially here, and then it'll become, it's no longer a practice, it'll become a normal, natural way of doing things.

Take the clear awareness into little doings, short ones at first, very short doings. For example, you open a door to go through. You walk through and you close the door behind you.

Can you be so present that you're totally there in those movements? There's a field of attention in which those movements happen. And then you take on and put off your shoes.

Now usually, what kind of action is that for most people? A means to an end. When you put on your shoes, you want to get them on as quickly as possible, and you're probably mentally somewhere else, the next step ahead, or 10 steps ahead.

And the other way around, when you want to take them off, you want to have them off already. The action is a means to an end. You want the end result.

That's the mind. And this is a tiny, tiny example, but your whole life consists primarily of things like that. If you look at your everyday life, it is an accumulation of such seemingly insignificant actions.

And the mind, of course, is dwelling on big problems, in the meantime, you're putting on your shoes and taking off your shoes, getting up and sitting down, going from here to there. That's the reality, and you're not there. Now to the mind, that reality is not fulfilling enough, because all these are so insignificant, I don't want to bother taking off and putting on my shoes.

I want to be elsewhere, more fulfilling. So the mind takes you elsewhere, more fulfilling. It won't be here.

It's a projected world, a conceptual world. And your search for fulfillment creates many problems, because you haven't found it yet. But it is amazing to realize that your whole life consists of little actions, mostly, that the mind would rather not be performing, because they're not important enough.

It wants to be somewhere else. So now, of course, it is true that the mind, it is true that none of these little actions, really, is it important to open a door and shut a door? Is it taking off, putting on shoes, pouring tea or coffee, or peeling a banana, or getting into the car, and driving, getting out of the car, and picking up the phone, dial a number?

It's life, all little things. And everything when your mind dominated is a means towards getting away from now. And when you observe how people perform action, you can see it.

They don't really want to be doing it, because they don't want to be here. But it's useful only to the extent that it takes them to the next moment. And they're almost looking there in, where is the next moment?

And so the action is performed here. The projection is there. And there never comes.

And in the meantime, they go through the motions of everyday life and everyday living. And yes, that's called life. That's life.

And then after years of that, of course, there comes an emptiness. And you don't even want to get up anymore in the morning, because what for? Now what happens when you shift and actually pay attention to something seemingly unimportant and non-fulfilling?

That is a shift that happens inside you. One thing that happens, the action that you perform, putting on your shoes, opening the door, and you can observe it in yourself or in someone else who is present, has a completely different quality to it. It's exactly the same action that's being performed, putting on your shoes.

And yet, and this cannot be easily put into words, there's a quality to the action suddenly, a care with which that action happens. Now care is something that gets very close to love. That's why in Buddhism they have a word called loving care.

You really have to put the two together. And when you pay attention in that way so that the doing is not a means to an end, what then flows into the doing is the energy field of loving care, love. You honor this moment in whatever form this moment takes.

So a completely different emanation is suddenly there. And the seemingly insignificant doing, which is not a means to an end, which all those things that make up your life become almost, I don't have a word for it, a worship, a great reverence is in it. So you perform that insignificant thing into something else.

And then see how things change around you as this quality of loving care flows into insignificant actions. So I would suggest you begin, if you haven't been practicing that already, already doing it as your natural way of doing things, some of you are already doing it and you're here just for deepening, begin with things that involve everyday objects with which you interact. And that's a lot of your life.

You spend in that way. Relationships, primary relationships, people think about all my relationships, the most primary relationship is the relationship with the world of objects. Because with that you relate continuously.

Now, if every object that you handle is a means to an end, then you never honor that. So you begin your practice by choosing little movements that you make as in your everyday life. And especially if you do it here, you're putting, getting dressed, maybe getting dressed is too much.

Let's just say putting on one sweater and you give it total attention. Just as you give attention to the perception of a flower, you give attention to the doing. An alertness is there while you put that it is not a means to an end.

And then even putting on a sweater becomes a sacred act. There's not division anymore between sacred and profane. And so don't choose long things because that's, to start with, little things, little seemingly insignificant doings.

Take picking up a potato as you help yourself. That's a few seconds of presence. And then perhaps you lose it for a moment and then you pick up the tray and walk with it to a table.

At first you will probably be slowed down a little bit by presence. But eventually it makes no difference whether an action is being performed quickly or slowly. Presence is there.

You could be running to catch a train and be totally present with each step. You could be performing an action. You're packing your suitcase, let's say, because you're late, you have to catch a plane.

You're packing a suitcase. Now, the mind is, I can't afford to be present now because I haven't got the time. At first it may seem that you slow down a little bit.

There's nothing wrong with that, slowing down a little bit as you do that. And then you realize, no, you don't have to slow down. In fact, you can operate with great speed in presence.

And so you're looking. And that is a wonderful thing when there is external movement and yet it emanates from an inner place of complete rest. Because the mental projection into future isn't there.

But you don't need the mental projection into future for great energy to arise. So you can, and you then look for the things that you need to pack. The drawer is open.

And you look there. There are the socks. There's the underwear.

But it's not labeled. You're so effective that the simple looking is enough. And the looking leads to doing.

And you pick just the right things. And you get the next drawer. And people around you, if they don't look carefully, they might think you're not present at all.

But if they look carefully, they can see that you're very much at peace while you're moving fast. That is the beauty of, you're not condemned to life in slow motion after this. Many, personally, it just happens that I don't have any interest in sports.

But, and I sometimes wondered why people for hours look at people hitting a ball or trying to get one ball into one hole somewhere or hitting the same ball. And for hours, this is fascination. But then when I looked for a while to find out why people look, I realized that the masters at sports are completely present while they are performing their sport.

There's no thought activity. When you look at a great tennis player, do you think the tennis player is thinking, okay, now he's going to move that way. So therefore, if I move into that corner, then I'll be in the right position to catch that ball.

On the other hand, no, there's not a single thought. It's simple. And people like to watch that because, I believe it's not because of the way they hit the balls.

There's some presence that shines through there in that limited activity. There may be some players that operate in a different way, but many of them are very present. And I heard an interview some years ago with a famous tennis player.

She said she had enormous joy in this match that lasted for hours. And she said it was such great joy, which is there whenever an action is performed. And it's in presence.

The joy is there. That is an aspect of, I talked about care. There's also joy.

Care, joy, love flow into the doing. It's there you are working fast. And great energy can

arise there.

Not dominated by fear, which is when you are under pressure, as most people who are, almost the entire world seems to be under stress these days. So it's a mind condition. Stress means I don't want to be where I am.

The mental projection pulls you. That pull is stress. Stress is when something pulls one way and something else pulls the other way.

So you can have stress in metal, and eventually it'll snap. And stress in human beings means you're being, by the mind, you're being pulled out of the now, out of yourself, into a mental projection of future, which you need to reach, but never quite reach it because it doesn't exist. In actuality, future must become the now for it to exist.

But the mindset is reaching out to the future. And then the doing happens with great energy, yes. But it's the energy of fear, because ultimately stress is you fear that you might not get there in time, to the future.

I'm late. So we are, we can't get there in time. So we realize that there is another way.

Not just another way of doing that wouldn't, it's not that we recondition ourselves to another way of doing. It goes deeper than that because the doing arises out of the being. It is another way of being that comes first.

Then the doing arises out of that. We are not here to recondition our lives. It's much deeper than that.

So you choose the little things that involve the world of objects, which is primary relationships and give care and attention to the doing, just as you perceive a tree or flower in that alert presence is the doing. You can even practice little things to realize that you are entering a state of consciousness of deep knowing, but not the knowing of the mind, not the knowledge of the mind. The mind separates you from the known.

It creates a separation. The knowing is punitive knowledge in which there's no separation between knower and known. And that is non-mental knowledge.

You can still use mind when you need it. A very funny little thing you can try is if you have a watch or a clock, not a digital one, but an analog clock or watch, if possible without the numbers on it, and you can practice in your room or anywhere, is it possible to look at your clock or watch and know what time it is without any thought, without the mind saying, it's 3.15. You simply look at where the second hand is and where our hand is and the second hand is. And there you know what time it is, but the mind is still. You may not succeed at first, but once you know that, it is a very strange thing to taste for the first time for some people, knowing that it's deeper than mind.

And this is a relatively insignificant thing, and yet it's beautiful if you can just know what time it is, but the mind isn't saying it. It's still. Only if somebody asked you then you could say it, then the mind would come in.

In the same way, when you look at a tree, you know on one level you're looking at a tree, but you also, there's far greater knowing of the tree has a presence, a beingness, and an aliveness that is far deeper than the label tree. So you still know that on the level of mind you're looking at a tree, this is a tree, but you know also that there's something far greater than tree and that its reality is not separate from you. Self-knowledge and knowledge of others become one.

So don't drive yourself mad by looking at a clock. Just a little example. In the same way, to truly take something in, to truly see, there needs to be a space of pure awareness in which the perception happens.

If you are an artist or let's say an art critic, if you have anything useful to say as an art critic, of course you have learned your things, the mind has its knowledge, but whether or not you have anything original and vital to say depends on whether there's a spaciousness while you look at a picture and then something arises. Any master in any field enters that state, that is the state of mastery. Because there are others who have mastered the technique, this can be learned mentally.

Any technique in any field of endeavor can be learned mentally. But then to go beyond the technique and become a master so that creativity flows into the form of the technique, whatever it may be, whether you construct something, that depends on whether there is space within you, empty space, clear space, at least while you're performing that. Because any insight, any realization, anything that is fresh, new and alive and vital is born out of that, not through thinking.

Thinking may give it form when you express it. But here, now of course I could be teaching you some skill and then see if archery, there's a nice book about Zen and the art of archery, how presence flows into the performance of a particular sport, if you can call it that, gardening, anything. But here we are not using a means, we are entering presence directly.

But if you are involved in any activity, see how it can be transformed through presence. So you practice with everyday things. And occasionally you may find yourself stopping in the middle of a movement and simply contemplating, holding an object, and it's there.

You're not thinking about it, it's just there. You feel the touch, there's complete attention to the seeing, the touch, the weight, and there is, one could almost say, a peace around it. Because the entire perception is happening within a field of stillness.

The tactile and the visual perception of this, and there is a field of stillness. That is an

enormous transformation in your relationships and interaction with the external world. And then the external world changes.

The world that you manifest out of your inner state reflects that state. Are you breathing? Do you know you're breathing?

All meditation methods ultimately take you to that. The method is to bring about presence. And if you are practicing or have been practicing, that's fine.

Any form of meditation. But beware of the meditator who is trying to get somewhere with this meditation. Become good at it.

In the future, of course. One of the most ancient forms of meditation is breath awareness. Don't even need to call it meditation.

Don't need to sit in a particular way to be aware of your breathing. Another famous meditation is vipassana, body awareness, in a structured way. Become, pay attention to different parts of the body.

It's also beautiful meditation can take you into presence. Unless you are a meditator who is trying to get to some future state of perfection, then you miss the now. The beautiful thing here is that we are not trying, you are not trying to get to some future state of imagined perfection.

It could be misinterpreted what this is about. Could be misinterpreted by the mind. If the mind gets in there and says, oh, this sounds great, I can become enlightened.

And you could be striving towards a state of perfection, an imagined state of perfection, where the me is fully perfect and fulfilled. Of course it's in the future. But then you would miss the essence of our gathering here, which is not that at all.

And so there's a deep truth in the saying, you may have heard it, you're enlightened already. That is truer to say, it is more true to say that you are enlightened already, than to say you can attain enlightenment. It's a little bit closer to the truth.

You're already complete in your essence. You already are who you are fully. And you can only know that in the now.

I suggest we extend our silence to beyond dinner. So we include our dinner in the silence until you leave the dining hall. And that'll be beautiful.

You can practice presence in all the little things that you do there, including chewing the food. At first you might feel a little self-conscious. And then it becomes a natural way of doing.

And then there's a talk, I believe, at 7.30, about a beautiful new book that has come out,

Mystics, Masters, Saints and Sages, to which you could go, that talk. We will be entering silence more deeply from tomorrow. So much so that silence will take over gradually as the main teacher, and I can then retire.

That's how it is. Somebody told me the story, she was in a group, a group of people, and she was with a spiritual teacher. And he gave a little talk.

And then they went into meditation and he said, let's just be, close our eyes and just be here together. And the meditation went on and on and on. And finally she opened her eyes and the chair was empty where he was sitting.

He had long since crept out of the room. And it was a powerful meditation. He left behind the emptiness.

John Klein was his name. He died a few years ago. Well, the form dissolved.

This is actually when you can sense, and you will sense it if you're not sensing it already, the emanation of silence that is here, that of course is within as stillness, without as silence, that it is a live presence, inner and outer presence. And when I say that becomes the teacher, that is not literally true, perhaps. But again, these statements haven't pointed to the truth that is beyond words.

And you could be in your room or walking in nature and feel that in that moment, silence is teaching you. And if you are comfortable with theistic language, yes, that is the presence of God within and without. So we'll have a silent dinner.

And for those of you who come to the talk, then after the talk, again, reduce the words for the rest of the evening to a minimum and go to bed in stillness. Be in the body. Feel your breathing.

No thought is important as you lie there on your bed. What could it possibly say? The nature of thinking will also change as presence arises and becomes your normal state.

The kinds of thoughts that you think, that changes too. We don't need to be concerned about this because it just happens. A point will come, this is my only prediction for the future that I'm making this week, a point will come when humans will create with thought whatever is needed for this moment, could be created out of consciousness, the prima materia, created whatever is needed through simple thought.

Of course, that'll be the end of factories. This won't happen until most humans have gone beyond ego. Because if they had the power to create with thought out of their egoic state, imagine what they would create.

Imagine what they're creating already without that only very limited power. Okay, let's forget about that. That happens.

I will conclude with a ritual of the bells. And of course, the bells always mean attention, alert, awake, be here. It's always a call to attention, waking you up out of mind.

The sound of the rain meditation. Can you sense that the sound of the rain is embedded, so to speak, in a field of stillness? It's not just the sound of the rain.

It's a vast stillness. These words are not to be taken literally, but vast stillness around it. And that gives it the beauty and the sacredness.

It's not the sound of the rain as such. What gives it the sacredness and the depth that it has is not that, but that which holds it, the stillness that is around it. And the moment you acknowledge that, you are deeper than the person or self.

You drop down to, something opens up. So the depth that is there in which the rain happens is really your own depth. You may remember a famous question sometimes called a koan, but it's not really a koan because it has a clear answer, whereas koans don't.

If a tree falls in the forest and nobody's there to hear it, does it make a noise? And of course it doesn't. Noise implies that there's a perceiving consciousness, and an ear, and an aware.

There is a vibration everywhere, but it doesn't become noise. Would there be the noise of the rain if without you? The depths in which the noise happens, would that be there without you?

Yes, it would, even if... Who is the you? Don't try to figure this out through the mind.

Because the moment you try to figure it out through the mind, you will have lost the rain, the awareness of it, and the awareness of the awareness in which it happens, the depth. Sometimes there's a spiritual practice that asks the question, who am I, continuously. Now could it be that you are that depth in which the rain happens?

So this is how awareness of sense perception can take you beyond that which you're aware of. At first you're acutely aware of the sound of the rain. And the point comes when you're aware of a deeper field in which it happens.

Then you shift. Awareness shifts from being aware of something to being aware of nothing, or no thing. We could call this awareness of awareness.

That's one, not two. It's only when we express it in language. There's a subject and an object.

Awareness of awareness. Self-awareness. And then it can happen that awareness of that field of awareness becomes much vaster to you than that which happens in it.

In other words, here, the rain, beautiful, but why is it so beautiful? And so there is something to it which you cannot put into words. It's just water dripping down from the clouds, little thousands and thousands of drops dripping down.

And a chemist could easily explain, well all that's happening is that these molecules are attracted by gravity and then they hit the ground and then they make a sound. That's all on the level of form. If you're only there on the level of form, that's all that it is.

And yet, and now you shift from being a scientist, there's nothing wrong with, I'm not offending any scientists, but scientists as mind. And then from being a scientist, you've suddenly, you become a poet. There's something to it.

It's the openness to a deeper dimension. You can become a poet without even ever uttering a word. Open to that which cannot be expressed in words.

An essence. So, and often it's not just with the rain. When you go anywhere in nature, there is something, there is an essence of sacredness, aliveness that is more, far more than the form, no matter how beautiful that you may be perceiving at that moment.

And yet it's not separate from it. Now this rain of course has been especially ordered for our meditation here. Because it's a perfect illustration, not only that it actually takes you deeper right now, it's also a perfect illustration of how one can live.

How it is possible to live. Acknowledging, honoring the world of form, the rain, and seeing the sacredness that is there. But you cannot see the sacredness if form is all there is.

Then you are purely the scientist who attaches labels to the rain. The form and the formless. And sometimes we call the formless the stillness.

It's a way of putting it. No word can contain it. Even stillness, it's a beautiful word, a beautiful pointer.

And yet there's far more to it than that, than any word could express. I could say God, if the mind didn't have so many concepts around it already, then that would be a great pointer. The world, God, rain, and the deep stillness in which it happens.

So could you live in such a way that you never lose touch with that dimension, the depths of yourself, the stillness in which all the phenomena of your life happen, come and go. And while they happen, know yourself as the stillness in which phenomena happen. And then recognize the sacredness, not to dismiss the phenomenal world as just illusion and just material stuff, whatever, not to dismiss it, but to honor also that because the stillness shines even through the phenomena.

It is within and far greater, it envelops all phenomena. Self-realization is that there may

come a time next week, next month, next year, when you suddenly remember sitting here and you say, and maybe you are in your office or somewhere, and you say, oh, that was so wonderful. We were sitting there in that room and there was such stillness and there was the sound of the rain and the sense of sacred presence.

And now here I am back in this place. And be forgotten then that it doesn't leave you. The stillness is not something that is ultimately not an external phenomenon.

It's within. You could be surrounded by computers and office noise and become aware suddenly of this place in which these things happen, the inner space, the inner stillness. You become aware when you enter the state of alert presence.

Oh, so this is not really memorable, but it's you can't remember yourself, not in the usual sense. There was a teacher, early 20th century, who talked about self-remembering. Of course, that was the deeper meaning of self, the field, not a memory of a past event.

And then the world loses its happiness because the world is very heavy, including, of course, your mind, the heaviness of your mind, the burden of carrying around that mind and walking with a mind-based sense of self with its problems, its anxieties. The world then is heavy. And now the world loses its happiness because when you know yourself to be the stillness in which the world happens, there are two approaches to that.

One could be called active, and the other could be called passive. It's not, those words are not totally right. The active is choose presence at this moment.

The passive is to step out of mind, alert, pay attention, listen to the rain. By choice, stepping out of the mind stream, or directing your attention to sense perceptions, other sense perceptions or into the body. It looks as if you were doing something.

You are in a way. That's the, one could also call it, it's a masculine approach to finding yourself. Zen embodies that very strongly.

Zen is a very masculine approach. So many Zen masters look as if they were in a bad mood. And in their presence, you dare not be present, you wouldn't dare not be present.

They can even be physically violent, that's the worst of it. It could hit you at any moment. So Zen is this uncompromising, I want to find the reality of who I am.

And I'm not moving from here until I find it. Sometimes Zen happens to you because life doesn't give you much more time. I read an account in the book that you heard about last night, Saint Sages, Mystic's Master, Saint Sages, about a man who was, he had, in his forties, he had lived mainly interested in money and women.

And then he had his second heart attack in his forties, and many other organs started failing. The doctor said, go home, we can't do anything more for you, just arrange your

affairs so that you get all your things in order before you die, which will be in about two or three months' time. That is also a Zen, like having an even worse than a Zen master.

So he went home. And now there was enormous urgency to his self-realization. No more time.

And that is similar to the Zen master asking you a nonsensical question and saying, give me the answer now, now! So sometimes either you go to Zen or life pushes you into, and there are accounts of Zen students who after years of meditation didn't find the depth of who they are, enlightenment, whatever, and then they sat down one night with a sword by their side and said, I'm not, if I don't find by sunrise, if I have not found liberation, found myself, I will plunge this sword into my belly. That's a masculine approach.

It does wake you up. It's not for everybody. But a minor form of this approach is for you to go out into nature and choose the state of presence, choose to focus totally on the sense perception, and suddenly become aware not just of the sense perceptions, but of the consciousness in which that perception happens, the field, as yourself.

So it's almost entering presence by choice, one could almost say. Of course, you can only do that because presence is arising in you. And it looks as if you could choose, and it's a helpful perspective, could choose presence.

And when you're challenged by a situation, you can choose presence just as, let's imagine being challenged by a Zen master, very challenging, with a stick or even a sword threatening to cut off your ear, whatever they do. And so you are, Zen masters can come in many forms into your life, uncompromising, tough, and so they wake you up. And you realize you can turn up the light within yourself.

The level of alertness rises, and you meet then the challenge in that alertness, which has a certain fierce quality to it when it is the masculine approach which will show you the fierce quality of presence. But presence is too vast to be able to be encapsulated in one word or one perspective. It has another quality which seems seemingly the opposite of fierceness.

So that is one we'll see. The fierceness of presence, it seems it's an active doing choice. And then there's the other, seemingly passive.

I say seemingly, it's not really passive. Whereas the first was that, the other is an opening, and all that it requires is, I could say it is a state of surrender, at any moment to have no resistance whatsoever to the form that this moment takes. Embrace the moment, there's only one, totally.

Wherever you are, whatever is happening, welcoming the now, in whatever form. That is the approach that is a very gentle, open, embracing the is-ness of now. One could call that the feminine approach.

And you sometimes see it in goddesses like Mary or Kuan Yin, sometimes there's this openness, the arms, holding the entire phenomenal world. Because that question, who am I, which is part of the active approach, who am I, is answered, because you don't ask that question in the other approach, the seemingly passive or feminine, you no longer ask who am I, because if you still ask a question, it means you haven't surrendered to now, you're still trying to figure something out. Questions subside when there's total surrender to the is-ness of this moment, you no longer ask who am I, but what happens, the same thing, the same realization happens.

How? It happens because you allow the phenomena, the form of this moment to be as it is. That allowing to be takes you from the egoic mind-identified entity to the depth of who you are.

And it is the same when you allow this rain to be totally. The allowing takes you to the spaciousness in which it all happens. The allowing takes you into that.

The not allowing, which is the usual egoic mind approach to the present moment, it has an issue with it, it doesn't allow completely, very rarely, that keeps you trapped in form, the form of me, because you're reacting to another form that arises there, a person, an event, a situation, a place, it's a form, temporary form. Now the me entity reacts to the arising of a form and then strengthens through it its own form identity of me. That's why the ego loves the reactivity.

And if it dropped the reactivity for too long, it would dissolve. You as the ego wouldn't know who you are anymore. If you have nothing to react against.

And so the reaction, the reactivity, strengthens its reactivity to an arising form in the now. It could be the rain. You could take the rain as a personal insult to you, as some people do.

Why is this rain happening to me just on a day when I'm supposed to be on a nice retreat and enjoy nature and now it's too wet to go out for long? It's me. Why is life always putting obstacles in my path?

And so the ego, it loves, it gets stronger. The me, when it complains and reacts, gets stronger. And many, you can observe that mind pattern in yourself.

Everything is personalized then. The form, the reactivity happens because you live in and through a personalized sense of self. And it's reactive.

It needs to be to keep up its personalized identity, me. You even react to and personalize emotions that come and then have your relationship with the emotions. Every emotion is a me emotion.

Anger, sadness. And you find a personal self in it, in the anger, in the sadness. Not

realizing there's nothing personal in anger, sadness, whatever the emotion is.

It's human anger, it's human sadness. It's the same in each human being, although it gets attached to different stories in the head. But the emotion, the feeling, is the same in everyone.

It's a human feeling that arises and you derive a personal sense of self and even react to that. You're sad but you don't want to be sad. The sadness is the inner phenomenon that may arise in the now and there's another entity that says, I don't want that.

And so through allowing what is to be, which includes inner is, not just external phenomena that arise in this moment, but also inner phenomena that arise in this moment, emotions, even thoughts, although there's a slight contradiction here, most thoughts are against what is. But if they are there, if that is in the passive approach, you're not saying, I must stop thinking. That's the active approach.

And sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. You tie yourself into knots. Sometimes there's an uncompromising as Nisargadatta, the spiritual teacher, put it when he answered a question, what is meditation?

And he embodied quite masculine. He looked a bit like a Zen master, if you have seen a picture of him. And so he said meditation, which is presence, is the uncompromising, and if you, I saw a little video of him, an old video, he talked like that.

I'll just act it out now. Meditation, the uncompromising refusal to have a thought. Now in the, and then there's the other approach.

This thought, mental noise, what can I do? What can I do about it? It is as it is.

Even that is accepted. Although the noise itself is based on non-acceptance, that's why it's so noisy up here, and yet as presence arises, you allow even that. There's almost a contradiction.

Non-allowance is happening here, and then allowance is the surrender to what is. And very soon you know that there is a vastness even underneath the mental noise. The stillness is never touched by it at all.

Through allowing it, there it is, or let's say there's an unhappiness. You're telling yourself a story about yourself, fueled by past emotion, and there's an unhappy, heavy entity walking, and one teacher, the active teacher would say, stop! Get out of your mind!

How dare you be trapped in your mind and indulge in that nonsense? Get out of your mind! Wake up!

Sometimes it works. Sometimes it may have the opposite effect, even deeper entrenchment. And you say, I'm not going to see him again.

He is dreadful. And then there's the other approach, the accepting approach, and you come to the teacher, and he or perhaps she says, you say, I'm so unhappy, it's just so. Okay, so you're unhappy.

What's wrong with that? The universe doesn't mind, and the tree you're standing next to doesn't mind. So what?

You're unhappy. Okay, it's all right. And then you listen, you mean it's okay to be unhappy?

It doesn't make sense. Yes, it is. What can you do?

And then suddenly, you say, okay, let's see if that works. Okay, I don't mind being unhappy. Let me be unhappy.

If that's what it is at this moment, let me be unhappy. I don't mind. It is.

The unhappiness is. That's a strange thing to do. What happens then?

Because there's almost, there's again a contradiction here, because the unhappiness says you do mind, very much so. And there's a deeper level that comes in that says, I don't mind. And so, and then see what happens to the structure of unhappiness, and then when it is accepted.

See what happens to anything within or without when it is totally accepted. Even if it looks undesirable, an undesirable inner state, or an undesirable outer state, or a completely unacceptable inner state, or an unacceptable outer state, and the unacceptable is accepted, fully, the now, as the now, the form that the now takes. That's what happens that takes you beyond form.

The allowing or the accepting of an arising form takes you beyond the form, to the formless. You become the formless. The allowing takes you to the depth.

It's not that you become it, you realize that you are it. So these are the two approaches. Some work better for one, depending on your individual, your temperament, but it could be a mixture of the two.

What I give you is a mixture of the two. A little bit more the surrender, I would say, than the, well, maybe much more. But it could happen that you have a teacher, if you have a teacher, who is, mainly expresses, say, the masculine approach, you see a Zen teacher for a few years, and can't quite get it, just almost, and then one day you, by accident, see a teacher who embodies the opposite approach, total surrender, and then suddenly you get it.

Or the other way around. You see a teacher that says, just say yes to this moment. That's the most powerful spiritual practice, that's all that you ever need.

Total alignment with that will take you to the depths of who you are, the spaciousness, and you become like the space that allows everything to be, through allowing everything to be. You are that space, or spaciousness. That's all.

And you listen, to never, not totally there, and perhaps one day you visit a teacher who expresses the opposite polarity and says, stop that nonsense, get out of your mind now! And you're out. So who knows what works for you.

I would suggest you use a combination of both, surrender, and then alertness. Really you can't separate them, they all, they of course take you to the same place, the same realization. There is a, and then finally they merge, they become, when the realization is there, they have merged.

They don't remain separate. So what I just explained, how in, with reference to the rain, which is our meditation here, what that looks like is, I could say, be alert. Listen to the rain.

That's the masculine, a gentle form of the masculine approach. Be alert, listen to the rain. Keep listening.

Keep listening. Don't think about it, just listen. Now can you sense the stillness that's around it, as yourself?

And can you feel it and can you be aware of both? The manifested, the unmanifested, the awareness, and the phenomenon. Self-realization.

Here and now. Or the other approach, and that was a gentle form of the masculine approach. The other is, welcome the sound of the rain.

Because it is. Welcome the sound of the rain completely. Totally.

Because that is the form that this moment takes. And you welcome this form completely. Takes you to the same place.

And in the surrender approach, which is this, you don't even, you don't need to say more. Then you know who you are without words. The reactivity of the egoic entity has a momentum and occasionally it'll come up.

Even after this session. You can adopt then the masculine approach. As soon as you notice it, turn up the light.

Be in the body, present, alert to sense perceptions. Oh, I lost the now. I'm stepping back into now now.

Or you can, the negative, the reaction to what is, you observe it as an emotion around an event, a thought, a judgment around an event, and you notice it, and you allow it to

be completely. Very powerful. So what you notice is the no to the now, to what some event, some person, some situation.

An inner no. Mental, emotional no. Contraction.

Even in the physical body it can be felt as a contraction. And the ego likes it, because that contraction is the egoic entity. Okay?

Then you notice the no, and you realize there's nothing personal in it. You personalize it, you say you still, you see, you can't do it, you spent a whole week on this retreat, and you're still doing it. You see?

You can't do it. It's pointless. You might as well give up.

That's what sometimes the voice says. And so you don't personalize the no, because the no has lived in the human collective mind for thousands of years, the contracted egoic state. You notice the inner no, and you say, here goes another no.

That's okay. Let it be there. Here goes a judgment.

All right, here goes another judgment. Let it be there. Here goes the anger or the sadness.

All right, there it is. What can I do? It is.

So that's a very powerful way of going beyond this, bringing a yes into the no. Bringing acceptance into non-acceptance. Accept even your non-acceptance, but you can only do that.

That implies there's sufficient presence already in you, and in each one of you there is, otherwise you would have run home already. It would have been unbearable. There's sufficient presence for you to notice that there is a no.

Now, you may not notice it immediately. How long an inner state of no can persist varies. It can be there for a minute.

It could be there for an hour. You might carry it for a day or two. Who knows?

Many people carry it almost continuously. It's probable that the no won't live undetected in you for that long when it arises again. I predict, I don't make many predictions, but I predict that it won't be undetected in you for too long, and that's all that's needed to detect the inner no to what is.

And once you have detected it, you can use, you can adopt the masculine approach, if that is your inclination, say, okay, I'm getting out of this. Or you adopt the feminine approach. Here's another no.

Here's a contraction. I allow that to be completely. I allow it.

It is as it is. Both work beautifully. So all that's needed is knowing that it's there.

And this may happen here. Even here. You may get up in the morning, and the first thing you hear is the sound of the rain.

And an habitual reaction comes into your mind which says, oh no, not another rainy day. I can't put up with another rainy day. Why did I come?

And the first train of thinking starts. Why did he have a, does he put up, has this retreat in the middle of the fall when he must know it's rainy and it's not. And why did I come here?

It's pointless. Getting wet, it's miserable, so much more comfortable sitting at home. God, I have my own bathroom.

I've got, I'm cut off here. I can't even make phone calls. Who knows what's going on in the world?

There's no TV. What's a, oh, Mark, just, big no, continuous no in the head. And then a person in a bad mood steps out of the cabin.

And of course, an ego in a bad mood is a bigger ego. Good mood is dangerous to the ego because you're going towards peace, and in peace it dissolves. Prolonged peace is dreadful to the ego.

So the egoic entity which is fueled, of course, also by the pain body, loves its unhappiness, its reactivity, and it may reassert itself here too at times. The only question is how long it takes you to detect it, to know it's there, which is the arising of presence, or how long you're totally identified with that mental-emotional stream. And that is the entity that didn't want you to come here.

And with some of you it was not clear even one or two days before whether you would actually come or not. It was yes, no. Something didn't want you to come.

Maybe you were dragged here by somebody else. That's a slightly different matter. And just to make you keep you happy, I'll come along.

All right, I'll come on the retreat. So you're happy. But now you're here.

And always in every retreat there's several people who cancel the last day or the last two days. Something has just come up. I can't make it.

Retreat centers know that, so they don't give you your money back. So something in you loves being here, and something in you hates being here. There's a depth in you that

loves being here.

And there's an entity that is, that's enough of this. And that entity is threatened. Its unhappiness, which is part of its identity, is threatened here.

I don't want to lose myself. Somebody wants to take away who I am, or the miserable self. I don't want to lose myself.

All the things I've been complaining about for the last 20 years, in vain. Invested in all this, and now it's gone down. The stock market has crashed.

Now, I know that it's, the rain seems permanent, but it's not. What is permanent is the stillness. Timeless might be a better word.

So if you go via phenomena, via sense, through sense perceptions to the stillness, first focus on the perception completely. And then almost naturally, after a little while, you become aware of the field in which the perception happens. Almost naturally.

And then there's great depth to the sense perception. The sense perception, in this case it's the rain, happens in a depth, it goes very deep. And then the same, if this is easy, relatively with rain, you could meet in the same way that you sit here, in the rain, and meet the rain, be with the rain, you could meet another human being.

Giving total attention to the form of that human being, the physical form and the psychological form, whatever he or she is expressing through speech or behavior. And then being aware of the field of stillness in which you're meeting that human being, in which the perception of that form happens. So you take each human being deep, without feeling that I am doing something, it just happens.

Every human being you meet, you take him or her into that depth where you realize who they are and who you are, in that stillness, as one that is the most powerful healer, healer in the widest sense of the word. And then one could almost say each human being finds him or herself through you. Not you, the little you, the little me, but you as the consciousness, the stillness.

So as this arises in you, you cannot not teach. Even if you're not teaching directly, you will teach through every interaction that is non-reactive. You teach presence.

Or as A Course in Miracles puts it, you become a teacher of God. You cannot not teach. And you're even, although you might say in nature nothing has to learn anything from humans, you teach even nature.

You bring presence into nature. But by being in stillness with a natural form, let's say a tree or a flower, there's deep completion and fulfillment that happens to that tree, which knows its own sacredness through you, its own beauty through you, its finds itself

through you, but not of course the little form of you, the consciousness, the spacious field of presence that you bring to it. Maybe that is a deeper meaning.

We see sometimes St. Francis preaching to the birds and the animals. I'm sure he didn't really preach to them, because on that level they have nothing to learn from us. What could a human say?

They could teach nature. Nature is so much more sane than the human mind. There's such sanity, such purity, such purity integrity in nature.

So on that level you cannot teach nature. Nature teaches you. It can teach you stillness, but then there's a depth when you find the stillness that nature has naturally as its natural state.

There is an added dimension to it of knowing, because you have been lost for a long time. Now you find yourself again. Now there's an added dimension to it.

That's what you can bring to nature. And perhaps that's what St. Francis brought to nature. And another aspect of that which then emanates from you when you know who you are is love.

Don't even need to talk about it. It's there. It's natural.

It's there naturally as your normal state. And love simply means recognizing the other, recognizing the other as yourself. In its essence, yourself.

Perceiving the other through your own essence of being or presence. Even recognizing the rain as yourself ultimately. So the entire world, every form is recognized in its essence as a manifestation of the one consciousness that you are.

Timeless, pure consciousness, which is the stillness. And so you come to live in such a way that nothing is outside you anymore. It's no longer perceived as this is me and there's the rest of the world.

That's the egoic state. Me against the rest of the world. Me against the universe.

That's the egoic battle. And that's no longer there. One could say that any thought that arises as you sit here is a very subtle non-allowing of this moment to be as it is.

As you hold attention on the rain, you may sometimes feel a pull back into thought. Like somebody pulling you by the sleeve. Come this way.

Pull, pull. The momentum of thought. Oh, all it's necessary is for you to notice it.

The pull of thought. And then you focus back on the rain. So we are going deeply.

The weather is exactly, of course, as it should be for our purposes. And we are going

deeper into stillness here. So we will keep, I recommend it, keep noble silence today for the rest of the day.

Unless we ask, I don't know, maybe this afternoon or tomorrow, there may be some questions arising, then that's fine, of course. But otherwise, just be in silence, alone with your mind, if it's still there. Take some time, even if you're here with a friend or partner, take some time each day, maybe an hour, whatever, alone also.

Take some time alone with nature. Bring the alertness to it, the stillness. Walking, I mentioned yesterday, choosing little actions and bring complete presence into the movement, so that the movement doesn't become a means to an end.

And the same you do with walking. Because as you're here, you walk between your cabin and here. Between your cabin and the hot tub.

And then you walk maybe a little bit into the forest and you walk back. Is the walking a means of getting to the other place? Is there quality in each step, which means presence?

Or are you elsewhere? That's the question. Do you hear the crunch on the gravel?

Crunch, crunch. So it's the same way you listen to the rain. You listen to the crunch.

There's that. And so there's a stillness in which the steps happen. Listen to that.

That means there's quality, awareness, which is, I use that word quality, it came to me at some point, to describe any action that happens in or out of that state of aware presence has a quality. The same action performed in the mind-identified state which wants to get to the end of the action, it only wants the result in the future, is of low quality. Now you can sense that if you observe the same action taking place and one person is performing it because he or she wants to get to the end, maybe walking between the cabin and the hot tub, one person is walking the same speed, the same kind of walk, one person is mentally already in the hot tub and the other person is totally there with every step.

And if you observe them both, you can see the qualitative difference between the two walks. And you can then see why I use the word quality to describe it. You can get a sense of there's beauty in it, there's an aliveness in it.

It is not a means to an end. And if you should ever make something with your hands, manufacture something, then, or you're an artist or whatever, in the state of presence, that state of quality flows into this work. And when it's finished, whatever it may be, a painting, a sculpture, or even making a table, or who knows what, the finished product then still carries a fragrance of that state of consciousness out of which it came.

That's why it has high quality. And it doesn't require a lot of awareness to feel it. Many

people who otherwise are unaware can recognize the piece that emanates quality, that is made, they don't know why, but they know it feels wonderful.

So every great work of art comes out of that state of presence. And the contemplation of art is also one way of entering the state of presence because that work still carries the fragrance of presence. So you contemplate that picture, if it is a picture, and suddenly you're in the same state that the artist was when he or she painted it.

Stillness, still, alert, openness. And so some artists have painted totally unremarkable scenes, nature scenes, which are not spectacular. Usually the extremely spectacular nature scenes are not real art.

You get this huge mountain with huge clouds and then there's a stack or something, and one can see it looks nice but it's not quite art. And then there's another totally unremarkable picture. Nobody would have looked at that scene twice.

Monet, whatever they painted, just relatively unremarkable things and there's an essence there. Van Gogh painted a chair, the cheapest chair you could find, old. Nobody would have paid 50 cents for it in a second-hand store, and he chose that and saw it in the state of presence.

And then he painted the chair and it still carries, there's more in that painting than the chair. Just as there's more in the rain than the rain. Now, some artists, they lost the state.

The moment they stepped out away from their canvas, they went into, many of them, into mind state. And the only place where they were free is when they're facing the canvas. Or you don't want to be reduced to that.

This is your whole life becoming that. And then whether or not you produce a work of art is irrelevant. Your life is that.

Just stay for a little while with the rain and the empty chair. When we look for a title for the tapes for this retreat, we already have it, The Rain's Retreat. And the next day, maybe this is even loud enough to be recorded on the tape.

It may be quite a few times on a retreat like this, because it is almost a week, quite a few times you have to enter, re-enter, surrender, re-enter presence. Some suffering may come up, and then you surrender again. Surrender is the shift from no to yes, to what is.

When you live in a continuous yes to what is, then you don't need to surrender anymore. And that, of course, is a very easy way to live, very easy, when you're not in disagreement with the suchness of this moment. Life becomes very easy.

But the mind says, oh, it's very hard to live in that way. That's how it is for humans. What

is easy looks hard.

What is hard looks the easy way. So that's the shift from the yes to the no is always the surrender. And some of you, if my ears can be your first retreat, and even to be quiet for a whole day, may bring up resistance, unhappiness, may even trigger the pain body.

Can't take any more of this. Who says? Well, this thought says it.

And then you let go of that. And then there's a cessation of that thought. And this moment is fine.

Until the next thought comes up. No, no. And then that subsides.

And again, hmm. Oh. And another wave comes.

Thought wave. And then perhaps the old pain that lives in you, as it does in most humans, awakens temporarily. The pain body, the accumulation of old emotional pain.

Suddenly there's a turbulence inside. And when the two get together, that when it, there happens to be a thought, I can't take any more of this. Or a thought, this is dreadful, this rain doesn't, won't it ever stop?

Whatever the thought is. And at that moment, the emotional energy of old pain wakes up and links up with that thought. And the moment the connection is established between the weaving of the thoughts in your head and old emotional pain, then it's much more difficult to get out of the thought because it won't remain this one thought immediately because of the emotional energy that has flown into that thought.

It will become the energy, the relatively minor energy that was in that thought, just a little thought, I can't take any more, now becomes, I can't take any more. Because there's the old emotion amplifies and energizes that thought and that immediately develops into a stream of similar thought. And then angry about other people, who do they think they are?

And that is the link between, once the two have linked together, the emotional, old emotional pain and thought structures that deny the now, then you have an enormous, heavy sense of self suddenly because then the thoughts are so empowered, so amplified by the old emotion that very easily they draw all your attention in, all your, so you're completely identified with the thought stream because it's so powerful, it's powered by emotion.

And what before was simply a conditioned interpretation of a situation, you called it something, the mind, according to its conditioning, called a situation, interpreted it in its conditioned way. For example, it's a conditioned way to say that rain is bad, it's bad weather, it's bad, it's a relatively harmless conditioning, so it attached a label to that, so

you couldn't see beyond the label bad weather. And you can see from this morning what that does to you when you attach even a simple label like bad weather to that, what it obscures for you immediately, the depth that is there in what the mind calls bad weather becomes obscured, the intense aliveness that is there in the rain, around the rain, when you pay attention to it, the sacredness that is there, all that doesn't exist for you when you, a label arises, a mental label, and there's complete identification with the mental label and this means you completely believe in what you have just said, bad weather.

And so that life, your life becomes a shallow phenomenon because if everything like this is immediately labeled, all depth is removed from it and you live in a shallow world of mental conceptualization and you've just conceptualized the sacred phenomenon of this rain, and now you think you know what it is, you've called it something, and you've deadened yourself to it. So that is the, it is an act of violence, it's of course unconscious, it's not violence in the sense that we normally think of violence, but to do that to yourself and to others by labeling them, you do it to nature, you label, the first act of violence against nature is to have a label like bad weather and believe in it. And so the depths and aliveness and sacredness is immediately covered up, all you have now is a label that you relate to, and you cannot go beyond, it's right there in front of your eyes where there's enormous depth, and so you've cut yourself off from the depth that is there, but that is the inner equivalent from your own depth that is beyond the mind, you are trapped in mind.

And so that happens with interpretations that come, labels that you attach to situations, that you attach to people, labels that you attach to yourself, and completely believe in, mental labels that come up according to mental conditioning. So you can see the reduction of one's aliveness, one's own depths, one's own reality, when you live in a world of conceptualization, labeling, interpretation, predominantly, as still most humans do, rarely do they step beyond, and those are the moments that are so rare, they say, what was that that was so wonderful 10 years ago, there was something so wonderful, what was that, I was there, and you stepped out of labeling, out of interpretations.

So that's, and that is an interpretation of the mind now, and you can see that that is what that does to you. Now, what we call interpretation, when it is empowered by old pain, the interpretation, old emotional pain, the interpretation becomes a reaction. Reaction, bad weather deadens it enough, but when it's reactive, then you feel very bad about the bad weather, and you are completely identified with feeling bad about the bad weather, and complaining.

So you have an added force to what was already bad enough, you've cut yourself off, and now your whole identity is reactive, and you take that to be the truth, the bad weather, and then you have a personalized reactive relationship to the bad weather, the so-called bad weather. You can see how you're drawn into a spiral of illusion, away from reality, when you get trapped in that. And once you see that, it's not surprising how mad

human history is, how so much senseless nonsense, violence, so it's important to observe that.

Observe already, there's the interpretations that you believe in, and then occasionally when the pain body awakens, those mind structures become empowered, energized even more, and a sense of self, a strong, very heavy sense of me is derived from the emotion that is coupled with the thought. And then the vicious circle is established between the pain body and your thought processes, and you're completely identified with that vicious circle of emotional pain and thought. In other words, you become a very unhappy entity on the planet, with great heaviness and emanation of great unhappiness, and you are forced, because of complete identification, you're trapped in that cycle in which now the pain body, the old emotional pain, an energetic entity, one could almost say, in you, feeds on your mind.

And the mind, every negative thought, gives fuel to the emotion, so it adds to the pain body. And the egoic entity, a large part of the egoic entity, is pain body. So that's why the moment you are trapped in this vicious circle of pain body and mind activity, it is a form of, one could say, addiction to pain, an addiction to emotional pain.

In other words, at that moment you don't want to get out. No way. You don't want to be free, because you are not, you're asleep, so to speak.

What is pretending to be you is a mental emotional pattern with which you are completely identified. And it feeds on thinking, and then it feeds, as most of you know, it feeds on, once it's active in you, you will easily provoke others, even by your mere presence sometimes. At other times you will actively do something to provoke a partner to give you a feedback of more emotional pain.

But even your very presence could be provocative if the pain body is active in you and the vicious circle is running between the story in your head, that continuously working, and the pain, and you're walking out in the street and then you walk into a shop, just too innocent to buy a little paper or something, and it may happen that the shopkeeper is also in the grip of pain body at that moment. And it's the likelihood that at that moment you will have a very unpleasant interaction for some reason with the shopkeeper, it's very, very high. Because even if you say nothing, pain bodies can sense each other.

And that is amazing when you watch it. So when you are a walking pain body, you have to be very careful because you will attract other walking pain bodies to you, they will recognize, it's all unconscious of course, but they will recognize you, and will be drawn to you because they can feed on you and you can feed them. And this is why some people who are very, totally unconscious, and there are still many humans on the planet who are totally unconscious of this process, there are humans in whom the pain body is not just a phenomenon that arises once a week, for an hour or two.

There are people in whom the pain body is there 90% of the time, and even 100% of the time. Some people live in the whole identity is a painful sense of self, a me, either very, continuously very sad and heavy, or almost continuously angry, you can see it when you, if the predominant energy vibration of their pain body is anger, and that person walks past, you can sense it coming. It's just waiting for an excuse to externalize the anger, and when you look into the eyes of a person possessed by a pain body, you can see that the pain body looks through their eyes at you, it's pure raw emotion, and it wants some reaction from you.

It loves a reaction, give me a reaction. So if it's anger, then it will encounter anger because it attracts anger from other pain bodies. So if there are humans who are almost continuously possessed by that, and they encounter many unpleasant experiences, which then continuously confirms to their mind that their interpretation of the world, which is probably that basically this is not a good place to be, everybody's out to get me, and continuously life confirms that interpretation, because they experience so many, they meet so many other pain bodies, don't know that that's what they attract. So nobody here is at that degree of unconsciousness of course.

But the pain body is still there, it is a pain body, and occasionally it needs to come up, and that is a good thing, of course it is, because it is. So to, once you know that when the pain body has come up and moves into egoic mind structures, the meaning of me becomes heavy, and looking for trouble, it's looking for trouble, and usually finds it. Many traffic accidents are caused by driving pain bodies, because a driving pain body wants the accident, that's the amazing thing.

He doesn't know that if you say you want an accident, he says you're mad, I don't want an accident, but the driving pain body unconsciously seeks the experience, the painful experience of an accident. And so, sooner or later, he will come into proximity with another driving pain body, and both want the accident. Nobody knows in statistics they don't mention that.

Number of pain bodies, number of accidents caused by pain bodies this year. So to watch that, of course, the first thing when you realize how that works is you can see it in others, that's the first place where you discover pain bodies and how they work, how they operate. You may see it in your partner, you may see it in a family member, in a child even, you may see it at work, your boss, your secretary, whoever, and people you're in close proximity with, and they occasionally go through this transformation, and they suddenly become very heavy.

And so, and then you detect, you can detect pain body in others, oh, that is. If you don't know what it is, sometimes the mind will say silly things like, I suddenly saw his real face. It wasn't his real face, it was his pain body.

I suddenly realized who she is underneath that sweet exterior. It's not, it's just a pain

body. It's not who she is, it's the human pain body.

It's emotion, human emotion, stagnant, trapped due to millennia, thousands of years of egoic illusion, great amount of pain has developed, thousands of years of not living in alignment with now, denying now, denying life, labeling, labeling started with God, our expulsion from paradise, the beginning of mental labeling, although it was still fairly harmless at the beginning, and then it becomes, in what we, bad weather. So you can see that you may even have detected in yourself the interpretation of the mind, it's a label, and the interpretation energized by the emotion which becomes the reaction.

So you have the two levels. It's bad enough to be trapped totally in mental interpretation and conceptualization, and then to add to that, you get the added energy of pain, emotional pain that flows into it, and that's the reactive me that lives on that. That's the human condition.

So is it surprising when you look at human history how mad it is, if that is the human condition? And it's so simple to see those workings of mind and emotion and identification with that, personalizing, me, personalizing mind streams, personalizing emotions, becomes a me, me. And so presence arises and suddenly you can see, so to speak, you step back from that, those patterns, and you see them in operation.

That's enough. Once you begin to see them, there's no stopping the further arising of presence. It's enough to just begin to see how they operate in oneself.

First you see it in others, and then after a while you see it also in yourself. The seeing is freeing. Seeing, I use it metaphorically.

Seeing is free. You don't necessarily see it with your eyes. You only see the external behavior with your eyes.

But you see it in the sense of know. You suddenly know. All that unconsciousness is recognized.

In that recognition it is depersonalized. There's no longer a me in it. It is simply a mental, emotional pattern that has been operating in humanity for so long.

That's the beginning of freedom. Freedom is already arising through seeing it. Oh, there's my pain body.

And for a while you will only see it afterwards. The energy may still be so overpowering when it takes you over that while it is in you, you don't see it. And the moment it leaves you, because then after a while it subsides because it has fed enough on your thinking and on other people, and then it goes to a dormant state, and then you suddenly see what's happened.

Oh, that was the pain body. The whole afternoon and evening yesterday, that was my pain body. And I was acting out this huge drama, perhaps with my partner, or at work, and completely believed every word.

And I even got others to go into similar states that I was in. And so that was a pain body episode. How interesting.

So at first the seeing may not happen in the middle of it. It may happen after the pain body has come and gone. Of course, it's never gone for that long.

It's dormant while it digests the food. And then after a while, a few days, a week, two weeks if you're lucky, the food is digested and then it goes, I'm hungry again. And that's fine if you see it after it's happened, as long as you don't make some personal thing out of that and think, I have failed.

I was in the grip of pain body and I couldn't do it. I couldn't see it. It's useless.

I might even give up. You see this little inner dialogue? Do you have that sometimes, a little voice that talks to you as you?

You see? You can't do it. Years of meditation and now you've been to the retreat and you still can't do it.

You're no good. So you personalize that. So make sure that the seeing doesn't become a renewed labeling by the mind.

Leave it on the level of seeing. Otherwise you personalize again and then you have a me problem. And then it happens that in the middle of pain body, using your mind and perhaps using other people, so you may already be in the middle of drama, you can suddenly see it.

It may not stop immediately, but you can see the energy of it. Or you may be involved in deep negative thinking about yourself, somebody else, the situation you're in, what you're going to do to somebody, what you're going to do to yourself. Some pain bodies are very self-aggressive.

Hate myself. I hate you and I hate myself. Some pain bodies attack you personally.

So suicide can happen in that way. The pain bodies last and final triumph against the world. So, and in the middle of it, you can suddenly know what's happening and you're shouting at somebody or you're shouting in your head at yourself or you're shouting at somebody in your head, what you're going to say to them.

And suddenly you know it. Oh, there it is. And that's freedom.

The arising of the witnessing presence. You don't need to, so it is not necessary to find

some strategy for fixing yourself as far as the pain body or anything else is concerned. How can I, this isn't right, I shouldn't have a pain body.

How can I fix myself? It's not necessary. Not that you would even succeed.

See it. The seeing is freeing and then less and less are you identified with the movement of pain arising. And then very quickly, and many of you are at that point now, where pain body still arises, but it's no longer using your mind.

Or if it is using your mind, it can only use it very briefly before you wake up, so to speak, out of that identification. And then what's left when you wake up out of the identification with mental identification with pain body, at that moment you wake up and what's left is simply the emotional movement in here, in which you feel in your body. It's no longer fueled by thought.

It's recognized and seen for what it is directly. Your attention is on it directly. Attention.

You give it just, oh, that's the seeing, that is the attention on it. Attention frees you. Attention, you give it attention.

It's no longer feeding on your thinking. It cannot feed on your attention because the attention is a very high frequency. Thought is a lower frequency.

It's all the same, but thought is like, and attention is, and then at that moment the pain body is no longer your personal problem. It is not a personal self anymore. It has become un, that expression doesn't exist, but I'll use it, it has become unselfed.

And that's enormous liberation. You're already free. You can be free before you are completely free of pain body.

That's the good news. You don't have to wait until there's no remnant of past emotional pain in you, which after all is, the personal aspect of it is only a small part. There's the entire human race in here with its pain.

And you don't have to wait to be free. We're in its own time when the energy has become transmuted and has become freed. And the amazing thing is when you begin to put your attention on it and something happens between the energy field of the attention and the trapped energy in the pain body, the attention actually instead of the pain body feeding on attention, it can't, the attention feeds on the pain body.

One could say it's like the pain body is the coal and the attention is the fire. Or any substance, any fuel, fire will consume it and transform it into itself. So the beautiful thing is that your attention transmutes that energy.

So it's not that you need to get rid of the pain body because it is life energy, but stagnant and trapped due to egoic delusions. Can't move anymore. And so attention is

on it.

And it actually, this is the strange thing why people with heavy pain bodies, one could say, are almost more likely to wake up out of their identification than people with light pain bodies. So the pain body transmutes that energy and so the vibrational frequency which was... becomes...

I don't take anything too literally, these are just pointers. And that's a beautiful thing. But you're free already to let this process happen.

If it takes 10 years, so be it. Who cares? But you are free of believing it to be yourself.

You have depersonalized the human pain because you have realized that anger is not... there's nothing personal in anger. There's nothing personal in sadness.

There's nothing personal in any emotional movement. It is human emotion. Why make a me out of that?

A heavy sense of self. And so you're free. And occasionally you, that free entity, experiences turbulence.

Okay, well, weather change in the air, weather change inside. A thunderstorm. A thunderstorm is not bad out there.

It's beautiful unless the mind calls it bad. Just the same as a turbulence can happen inside you and you allow it to be just as you allow the rain to be. You don't have a reactive personalized relationship anymore or complete identification.

It simply is. The suchness of this moment is that there's a movement of turbulence, pain in some form. And then it quickly passes when it's no longer that identification with mind isn't there anymore.

You may experience interesting things like what before was a heavy drama episode in your life when you were identified with pain body could now be a quick movement through your energy field of pain. Let's say it's anger. And you experience a quick flash of moving through you and it lasts for a minute, two minutes, five minutes or ten seconds.

Or it's there for a little while and you can then even talk if you have a partner. You can say, you know what's happening, don't you? Yes, it's your pain body.

Okay, well, okay. If it uses your mind, the pain body will immediately blame and accuse. You are responsible for this pain.

You, you, you did it. But if you know it, say, when you said that, it triggered my pain body. Isn't that interesting?

You would say to your partner. Or when you failed to do that or did that, suddenly it triggered and it's still here. Oh, thank you for triggering my pain body.

We may not go that far as that. But it can happen. And that's wonderful to watch that how gradually the energy charge of pain body becomes lessened.

And the same pain is just a, and there's no me in it, no story attached to it. Mental story attached to pain, to human pain. Me, my suffering, my this, my that.

So you can watch that here and you can alert so that you can see when an interpretation or a labeling, how quickly if the pain body is ready, it can trigger the pain body. And even a thing like getting up in the morning and saying in your head, bad weather again, not again. And not having any distance from that thought.

Not, if you have no witnessing presence, can't step back from the thought and recognize it as a conditioned thought, as Gurdjieff called it, was all mechanical, mechanical like a clockwork. Same old thoughts. If you can't stand back, then if the pain body could use that thought to attach itself to, and then we have the beginning of the pain body episode.

And then you might not even come here if it's on the retreat. You may be stuck in your room feeling, I'm not staying here. Why did I ever come here?

And all those thoughts that go through and feed the pain body. Interesting to watch. But if you recognize, then it passes.

That is the practice. So there's no guarantee, of course, that on spiritual retreats, the pain body remains at home. Just because it's a spiritual retreat, doesn't mean that the pain body won't be coming with you, as well as your mind.

They both travel with you. Somebody called me last year and said, I'm going on a retreat, totally alone, in a cabin in the mountains for two or three weeks. I can't remember.

There's enough, taking enough food, and I'm staying there completely alone for my private retreat. And I said, your mind is going with you, of course. My mind?

I don't know. Yeah, I suppose so. And when he came back, he said, he called and said, now I know what you meant.

And he said, my mind got worse and worse. With every day, the mental noise got worse and worse, louder and louder, because it couldn't externalize itself. There was nobody to speak to.

And so the inner dialogue just became louder and louder, and more hyperactive, until finally he reached a point where he couldn't stand it anymore, and then he entered

surrender. So that was there, and that is here for you, of course, also. So these things need to be known.

It's a very simple, basic principle so that you can watch when it happens. If you don't know about pain body, you can meditate ten hours a day, and suddenly be taken over totally. I know people who have been to fifteen and more vipassana retreats.

Not that there's anything wrong with vipassana, it's a beautiful meditation. But vipassana retreats are long, I think ten days or something like that, of every day you meditate for something like fifteen hours. It's a boot camp for meditation.

Sometimes it works beautifully, but I have people who do fifteen of them, and they go through the same unconsciousness as everybody else, periodically. But haven't you observed yourself for so long? But the pain body tricks them every time.

So there are many levels to being here. Sometimes you have to face that, and at other times, there's the simple, the utter and profound simplicity of the now. And there's clarity, and there's non-labeling, if only for maybe a short duration, for a while, it doesn't matter.

There's non-interpretation, non-labeling. Just pure, clear, aware presence. And the rain is still there.

Permanent, semi-permanent. The same attention that you give to the rain is the attention that you give to the pain body. And so as you accept it, say yes, because it is at this moment, not only does the pain body become transmuted through the attention, also you become aware that around the emotional pain is a field of spaciousness, and the turbulence happens within that.

It's much easier to sense that stillness that is there when you give attention to the rain. Pain body is a noisy phenomenon, and yet there's also stillness around it. That's another, this is of course, presence.

Within the field of presence is the pain body. And gradually, let's see if there's another image I can use. All images, of course, are limited, but one could almost say that, you could say the pain body is a block of ice swimming in water.

And gradually, it becomes water. Ultimately, it was never different from that, just a different frequency, different molecular density. And it becomes water.

It dissolves into presence. That's another image one could use. Perhaps if there are any questions, we may start with having a few questions, particularly perhaps pain body, if that might be good.

Please feel free.

[Speaker 2] (5:38:19 - 5:39:59)

Well, this is body, and certainly pain body is part of that, but the scene here is that awareness has been trapped in thought. That's really clear, really clear. And a lot of thought is after the fact.

I think some decisions already been made some other place, and thought thinks it's making it, that kind of thing. Just a lot of seeing of thought that way. So then, the body is my question now, because it seems like this is my body, because I can feel it, and pain could come up in it, and I could claim it's mine or not.

And it is helpful to hear your, what I would say, metaphor of pain body. Or if somebody came and he stood on my foot, this foot, I'd say, not pleasant, please move. But the sense is that ultimately, it's, and I don't mean to push it away, but it's not really my body.

[Speaker 1] (5:40:00 - 5:40:01)

Yes, that's true.

[Speaker 2] (5:40:02 - 5:40:16)

And that that's where there's some hypnotism going on now.

[Speaker 1] (5:40:17 - 5:40:19)

Yes, that is right.

[Speaker 2] (5:40:19 - 5:40:32)

Like mind, thoughts can hypnotize, and then body awareness can hypnotize as well. Although it's useful to take me out of the thought, then it's like, okay, then I can get trapped in this feeling.

[Speaker 1] (5:40:32 - 5:50:48)

Yes, if you attach the me story to the body, that can also be an illusion, of course. Form identity, to be trapped in form identity on one level is to be trapped in a thought form identity, which I sometimes call the psychological form of me, the image, mind images connected with me and my story, is one form identity. The other aspect of form identity is identification.

Identification means deriving a sense of self from identification with me and my physical body. That is the physical form identity. And you step out of both those forms.

Form identities, realizing that, again, there's nothing really personal. There's no me. It is the human body.

Any body is basically the same body. The human body is here, and there's no me in that either. So the two levels of disidentification is one is from the form identity of the psychological me, and the other is the form identity of me as my physical body.

So most people are still completely trapped in these two levels of form identity. And then you shift from that. When you go into the inner, when you sense the inner energy field of body, you already go beyond form identity, because form identity is also really an image.

You have an image of me, this physical vehicle. You see it in the mirror, or you look at it from up here and see parts of it. And then you enter the inner energy field of the body, and there's intense aliveness there, but not a me anymore.

So the end of identifying with a physical body can easily go beyond that by taking attention deeper into the physical, because you only identify with the external appearance of the physical body. And then you go deeper, and there's intense presence and aliveness there. And what emerges then is essence identity, one could call that.

And essence identity in some spiritual traditions is denied, they say. There is no identity anymore, or they say there's no self anymore. Buddhism says no self.

Hinduism, the ancient teachings say you will then find the self. But they are not in contradiction. It's just a different way of using words.

It's the illusory nature of identifying with any form, and going beyond to self-realizing, realizing who you are beyond form. And we've been pointing to it here. But any word you use is dangerous, although I have been using words, because any word you use is form again.

And you can easily concretize what in Buddhism is sometimes called emptiness, which is your essence. And on purpose they use a word with which you can't do very much. Not an encouraging word.

It doesn't encourage you to form another identity around emptiness. You can't. So very wisely the Buddha used the word emptiness to point to your essence identity, because he saw that was the best word that the mind cannot use to construct another form identity out of.

And I sometimes use spaciousness, or presence, awareness. As you expressed very beautifully just now, you said, awareness has been trapped in thought. So that's the truth.

Awareness had been trapped in thought for so long. And now awareness moves out of thought. And thought is form.

And so that is the birth into form. Awareness, pure consciousness, is continuously born

into form. Every time you think, consciousness is born into a form, a thought form.

And then it subsides into another thought form. And this is a compulsive process for most people. When that compulsive process stops, that is the deeper meaning of the Buddhists saying the end of rebirth.

Because that is the end of the compulsion to be reborn continuously into identification with some new form, and seek myself in this new form. It's a thought or it could be an external thing that a thought attaches itself to, and it adds to the sense of identity of me. Even a simple thing like a car, whatever it may be.

A child can give you your identity. A relationship, husband-wife, can give you an identity, form identity. Me, the wife.

Me, the parent. Me, the provider. Me, the this, that.

Form identity again, and then it always looks for new things to identify with, and then you acquire something new. There's a new thought form you identify with. Another rebirth.

The self has been reborn again into another form, and then it looks out for another one, bigger even. So what happens here, one could say, is the end of rebirth as the compulsion for the birth of form. And awareness, it's the opposite of birth, that's why I sometimes call it death here.

Awareness steps out of identification with form, and it is a blissful thing, and joyous, enormous thing to realize awareness, pure awareness in itself. And it's so hard to talk about it, and so dangerous to talk about it. Because that, the moment you utter a word, becomes again a form, and a thought form.

So any word is not the truth, it's only a little pointer beyond itself, it can never be it. And the best word, nobody will find a better word than the Buddha, emptiness. But it's not very encouraging to say that you are emptiness.

I use other words, and they also, they work. I do point out continuously the danger of identifying with words. So, the end of form identity, psychological form, physical form, emotional forms, thought forms, not me.

Again, the Buddha saw it all, I don't teach Buddhism as such, but there's such truth in it, that the illusion of deriving your sense of self from identification with form. Jesus probably also taught it, because we only really have fragments of Jesus' teachings. He used the strange expression, deny thyself.

I suspect that it's probably not been, hasn't been taken down correctly and then mistranslated. He probably said something like, dissolve the illusion of self, negate that

illusion. And so, just when I read that for the first time, it was not long after this transformation happened, when the self, the soul bubble of the self popped, I read those lines in the New Testament, deny thyself.

And at the same time I was also reading certain Buddhist texts, and I saw the essential characteristic, anatta, no self, no self, in any phenomenon, the illusion of self, deny thyself. And then I remembered that night when I was in bed, and the thought went through my head, I can't live with myself anymore. No self, deny thyself, can't live with myself, the illusion of self, a separate selfhood.

Amazing to see the truth everywhere suddenly. Yes, there it is. And in most churches they don't know the depths of the meaning when Jesus says, deny thyself.

I don't know how they interpret it, but the depths of that utterance is not recognized by most churches. It's all there.

[Speaker 2] (5:51:01 - 5:51:11)

So then, a couple of things. The body, if we want to call it that, becomes everything.

[Speaker 1] (5:51:21 - 5:51:54)

There's no longer a distinction between inner and outer, you feel. I mentioned earlier this morning, it's almost a sense that there's nothing outside of you. When there's no longer the separation through mental concepts, which is form, there's the clarity of perception, there's no longer the sense, me and the world.

There's the fluidity of, it's all me.

[Speaker 2] (5:51:56 - 5:52:04)

So then you say, the inner body, that's maybe a step towards that.

[Speaker 1] (5:52:04 - 5:53:04)

Yes, yes. The inner body is an energy that you sense, that energy is still form, one could say, a chi, perhaps one could call some, it is an energy stream, but it's not physical yet, it's prior to physical, but it's form. But if you go deeply into the chi, take your attention, you get to a place out of which it arises, no form, complete, and that's the emptiness, the spaciousness.

It can take you there, because it's its source, and as it is the source of everything. But I don't want to make it sound too complicated, it's enough to be in a non-interpretative relationship to the world, and if there's still mental interpretations, recognize it simply as mental interpretation.

[Speaker 2] (5:53:05 - 5:53:41)

One last thing, there's a lot of stories about enlightenment, and even last night I didn't get to go, I was having a massage, anyway, and the moment of enlightenment, which can become another trap, let's say, because the experience of enlightenment, the experience here is that it's not a moment.

[Speaker 1] (5:53:43 - 5:56:21)

Thank you, that's an important point. I was very reluctant, it took me a long time to finally put that story of what happened to me in the book, because then people have certain expectations. Either they expect that it should happen in that way to them, or they, at least they expect some event suddenly to happen, and in some cases it is, but it's not for everybody, it has been like that, that suddenly an event happens after which everything shifts and nothing is the same, a permanent shift in consciousness.

If you think it's going to happen that way, it may or it may not, then you're going to wait for an event to happen to you in the future, and that could prolong things considerably, because you're waiting for an event to happen to you, and perhaps you've read some spectacular things, some people experience fireworks, so to speak, and they say, it was glorious, glorious! Well, that hasn't happened to me, is it going to happen to me? And you're waiting then for something, it was somebody's transformation, and when they talk about it, it's colored already by their mental makeup, the moment you utter a word, it's already colored by the language you use, the culture you live in, and so on.

So it's never it, anyway, what they talk about. So it's important for many people, it has not been one sudden, even great teachers, there were great teachers for whom there was not one sudden shift after which everything, it was a gradual, sometimes fairly fast, but for most people now it will be a gradual shift, not fireworks necessarily, after which everything is changed. A gradual shift, for most of you, it's a gradual shift from the mind-identified state into presence.

Whether some phenomena are associated with it is irrelevant, because they come and go. Even those people who have had fireworks, they don't have fireworks continuously, they might say, I had fireworks 30 years ago, after that nothing was ever the same, and what really matters is what is your inner state now, what has the inner state been in the last 30 years after the fireworks. So, don't expect an event, it's not like that.

Thank you.

[Speaker 4] (5:56:28 - 5:57:03)

Disillusion of self and form that we were talking about yesterday, you mentioned that we can go beyond manufacturing, we can become our own factory, so to speak. When we've dissolved that egoic mind and gotten to a place, is that when we can create form, and is

that when we also create, if we choose to create our own form again? Yes.

[Speaker 1] (5:57:04 - 6:02:37)

Is that what they were talking about in Ascension? Yes. It's not so much, it's the strange, it's very hard to put this into language, it is not so much that then you as the entity creates it, but consciousness can flow into thought and use thought also as a tool, so thought is linked into the presence, as it is occasionally in minor forms with great artists who create great works of art where you say, this is sublime, how could a human being create something, and many things will be created that are even greater. But all that is, and of course the answer is, it's not the human being that, it's not that you say, okay, what am I going to create, what do I want, you know when this shift has happened, you don't really want anything anymore as an entity, you create what the totality creates through you, the one, you are one with the one, and the one intelligence then creates, it is similar, in one level similar, but on another level very different from how things get created in nature.

The tree, in this incredible beauty and aliveness, the tree does not, one cannot say that the tree decides on anything, the tree is aligned, consciousness expresses itself through this form, it takes on the form of a tree, it's not that the tree says, now should I grow a branch that way, and then the leaves, where should I put the leaves, and what kind of leaves do I want, it is, it happens. In the same way, but with an added dimension of depth and knowing, it happens through humans, it will happen through humans, the creation, it will not come out of an egoic need for anything, the joy of creating will be the motivating power behind the creation, not an egoic need to have this or to have that, so it arises, that kind of creation arises out of the fullness of life that you already are, and when you know yourself to be that fullness, that expresses itself in that way, so no need behind it, simply a celebration of the fullness that you already are, and then creations are no longer karmic creations, they have no karmic consequences, whereas mentally created things, egoically mentally created, whatever the egoic mind creates has a big downside, on the one hand it may be useful and nice, but every creation of the egoic mind has its downside, if you look at medicine, modern mainstream medicine, incredible things, beautiful, great inventions, and in the 19th century we still believed that there was no downside, medicine was progressing further and further, and now we see that there is a huge downside to the way in which mainstream medicine has developed, oh, what are we doing, antibiotics, soon they may not work anymore, through overuse, machinery is getting more and more complex and heavy, thousands and thousands die in hospitals simply because they are in hospitals, thousands and thousands die through medicines that are supposed to help, not saying this, the polarity, any science and technology, look at the incredible things that the mind is, but it's been created by the egoic mind, so it is karmically tainted, it has always, no matter what the egoic mind creates out there, it will have the other polarity, sooner or later you will encounter, oh, that wasn't meant to happen, motor car is a nice thing too, it gives you freedom, go

anywhere, and so on, the ego can identify with it, great, and of course it has a big downside too, it kills enormous numbers of people every year, it's not even mentioned, it's just like major war almost, I can't remember the exact figure, but since the invention of the car already, it's a million or two million, I don't remember the figure, when I read that I was amazed, it's like a huge war, another world war, it's almost the same number being killed by the motor car, so was that a good thing or a bad thing? Well, always you have the others, those are the creations of the egoic mind, and so there are limitations to what the egoic mind can create, fortunately, otherwise we would have evaporated already through our insanity, and when you go beyond the egoic mind, a deeper creativity will arise, it does not come out of any need, need for power, need for increased personal identity, it comes out of the joy, and that is the greatest power.

[Speaker 4] (6:02:41 - 6:03:14)

I was attempting to get a little information about the ascension process that Jesus and other masters have gone through, is that coming from what we're talking about? Yes. Once you get to a certain level, then you can, are you accelerating your own molecular frequencies so that you're still existing, and you can choose to rematerialize or dematerialize your physical body?

[Speaker 1] (6:03:15 - 6:06:54)

I don't talk about these things because it would create mental images towards which we are making room for the transformation of consciousness to happen, when it's become initiated here, it will do what it does, you don't have to even know it, you become very much like a tree, a flower that expresses it, because you are one with it, so that any details will create, some people, if I mentioned things like that, some people here would find it fascinating, others would say, oh, I don't believe that, I focus simply on opening yourself to the transformation, allowing presence to arise, then it takes over, just as I don't know what I'm ever going to talk about here, presence speaks, it says what it has to say here, me, I don't, I have no idea what I'm going to say when I come here, what form this gathering will take, I don't need to know, that's the beauty of it, presence knows, so you're open, you're aligned with that, it moves through you, and it does, it creates, so you become a transparency for that, simply an instrument, or the instrument isn't the right word, because it implies some separation, let's just use it, an instrument, but a transparency for that to express itself, so you are here to become transparent to that, the egoic density leaves you, once you are transparent enough, it does what it does, so I don't, I always avoid saying anything, I don't want to say anything that cannot be immediately, very rarely say anything that cannot be immediately verified and known, if I say anything that you can doubt about, then I've gone too far into something mental, it may be the truth, but leaving it at the most practical level, transformation, here and now, then the one consciousness takes over anyway, don't have to know the details beforehand, the rest is details, as Einstein said, Einstein said, I want to know the

mind of God, the rest is details, and that's a very profound statement, because he really said, I want to know what is the mind of God, the mind is the pure consciousness, is the mind of God, I don't know if he even realized the depth of what he said, he probably did, I want to know the mind of God, the rest is details, and I'm only concerned here with facilitating access for you to know the mind of God, the one consciousness, know yourself as not separate from that, and I leave the details, they come, those are the forms that then it takes, so trust that it'll happen. Einstein made some beautiful statements, and he was a scientist.

[Speaker 3] (6:06:55 - 6:08:18)

Thank you for being here. A question about, I see two states that you have described, and one is a state of alertness, another is a state of being, the consciousness being, or the awareness being trapped in a conceptual reality, the conceptual world that humans seem to build and live in much of the time. And as I sit here and listen, there's another state that seems to come in, and maybe it's a trick, but it seems to be slipping into a dream state, while I'm trying to listen to you and pay attention, all of a sudden I'm in a dream state somewhere else.

It's just like being completely different. And I wonder if you have any tips about staying here and not popping off into that when I want to be here, but pop off into somewhere else.

[Speaker 1] (6:08:18 - 6:11:47)

Yes, now the dream state is also the state, even when you conceptualize something in your immediate surroundings, like I gave the example of bad weather, saying that using the label and completely believing it, that separates, it is already, you're already trapped in a dream state, it's the dream of thought forms, and then that can take also the form of taking you, you're not even labeling anything that's around you, you go off completely into the world of thought structures.

They may refer to a place somewhere else in space or time, they may be just the play of thought, and that is a favorite thing of the egoic and entity of taking, stop, how can I stop him from listening to this, says the ego, the egoic mind, let's go off into dreamland, let's take him off into, and then you go off and ten minutes later you know the voice has been going, but you didn't hear a single word, because you identified with that, how can you be, stay present as you sit here, a good way is to be, as you listen, to stay rooted in your inner body, to sense in the background so to speak, an aliveness, even if you could only sense while you listen an aliveness in your hands, if you could only access that, but you can easily access the rest of the body, and have some attention, listen from there, I have, I feel the body even as I speak, and have some attention as you listen, so this anchors you in the now, the rest is another one that's of course closely related to body, if you sense yourself breathing while you listen, it also takes attention already, some

attention moves into the body because the breath moves into the body, so you sit, so you have an anchor for presence, and then when I stop speaking occasionally for a moment, then you feel it a little bit more strongly, and that moment it comes more to the foreground, that sense of inner body, when there's silence, or you listen to something that is not words, but just a sound, like the rain, and if you want to stay here and listen to the rain for more than a few seconds, without being taken away by thought, you may need an anchor to keep you in the now, so that you can continue to listen, so you stay in the body, listen from here, so you feel a general sense of aliveness and the sound, ultimately, if you go deep enough, there's the emptiness that's in the body, out of which everything comes, and that emptiness, that spaciousness is listening, through it you listen, so a little anchor helps so that you don't drift off like a balloon.

[Speaker 6] (6:11:48 - 6:11:50)

Thank you.

[Speaker 5] (6:11:52 - 6:12:34)

I have a very practical question. I find myself with all the events of September 11th in turmoil, and so it's either, it seems, it's all very seductive, and it's, I find myself really alternating between a lot of different states, and even if I can, while I'm meditating, or whatever, find that place of peace with it, then I go to catastrophizing, and really everywhere, so I could use some help.

[Speaker 1] (6:12:35 - 6:12:42)

What do you mean by, when catastrophizing, you project possible events in your mind, further events like that?

[Speaker 5] (6:12:42 - 6:13:05)

Yeah, and it's very enticing, in other words, part of my job, it involves part of my work with people as well, trying to help them, protect them, but I can feel that, I use the spiritual tools that I have to try to be at peace with it, but it's very inconsistent.

[Speaker 1] (6:13:05 - 9:30:04)

Yes, so there's turmoil around it, when you think about it. Well, that applies to many people, that they also experience that. It applied even more strongly, we had the first retreat just a few days afterwards, and that was very close to New York City, in New York State, we had a one-week retreat with 350 people, just after the events, and many people were in turmoil, and as the events were still closer then, but even now, many people still are.

This is a massive event in which we faced death. Now, I don't want to explain it away,

because if the mind creates explanations to give you some comforting explanations, that's not what would really help you. Facing death is something that most humans don't want to do.

Facing the fragility of all life forms, realizing how fragile all forms are, and sometimes that realization comes when somebody very close to you dies, and you're suddenly going into shock. It may be a premature death, then the shock is greater, as it was with these events, because it seems that all these people died too soon, but of course that happens a lot. Many people die through accidents and illnesses, and it seems too soon.

Many people who die in old age, they feel it's too soon also. Facing, I was walking in two weeks, maybe a week ago, 20 miles north of Los Angeles in a beautiful canyon, and we entered, there was an old abandoned house that had burned down, a huge big house burned down in the fifties with lots of little buildings, also burned down, and a wild, totally wild garden had grown, the original garden had become totally wild, just amazing to see the huge banana trees and all, totally wild, roof missing, and as we entered that piece of land where the house is, a sign was there, I call it a, it was put there by the city council, but I called it a sutra, a scripture, which said, danger, all structures are unstable.

And it's so easy to lose sight of that fact of how unstable all forms are, because in that, when the form dissolves, you are faced with the fact of death, which could come to any one of us at any time, suddenly. So it is, death is also when it is truly faced and not covered over by explanations. I could say to you, these people are all well now, it would require some belief on your part, it may be the truth, but I would make a statement that some of you would believe in, others would say, well, I'm not sure if that's true, and somebody else would say, how do you know that's true, and somebody else would say, oh, it's good to know that.

So I'm not saying that, I'm saying, sooner or later, each one of us, and sometimes it comes through accidents, sometimes it comes through violence, it can come through illness, it can come through old age, it can come through slipping on a banana skin, and die, could happen, facing the fact of death, the fragility of all forms, including this physical form, and not running away from that fact. To the mind, the egoic mind, which is, because ego is identification with form, death is the most dreadful thing that could ever happen, because it's the end of the form of me, so it doesn't want to look at it, or it will create an explanation to cover it up, but really, it's all a way of running away from the fact of death, that all forms are unstable. So not to run away from it, or label it as the most dreadful thing, because if death is the most dreadful thing there is, then you're really in a bad way, because it's going to happen to you.

And if it is the most dreadful thing there is, then what is the point in doing anything? We're going to die anyway, and we are condemned to death, it's just a question of when, as we are on the level of form, forms dissolve. And to stay with that fact, and it's a shock

when it happens, especially when it happens unexpectedly, suddenly, and to so many people, and so close to you, it is not a rare event for so many people to die all at once, it just happened that it was so close to home this time.

In many parts of the world every year something like that, and worse happens, where thousands, hundreds of thousands sometimes get killed violently, but it seems much more distant. And so it also happens here continuously in car accidents, people are killed by many thousands and thousands every year, but again that is so normal, you only read about it in the local papers, particular accidents in the big papers don't talk about single car accidents, it's normal, nobody questions it anymore, and so there you don't face it unless it happens close in your family, and that's a dreadful shock, imagine your teenage son being killed in a car, and it happens. That is as bad to the parent or those close, as thousands killed in that disaster, to those close to it. So here we have the fact, is death the most dreadful thing, or is there another side to it?

Is there another side to the fact that all forms are unstable, and perhaps on the other side of that fragility, if that's the right word, of all forms, perhaps hides, something is concealed that is the redemptive dimension of death. You may have read many accounts of people who have got close to death, who faced death, many of them speak of a sudden shift that they've encountered in the last few seconds, they didn't actually die, but they thought they would, they were sure it was going to happen, the accident, whatever it was. The last few seconds, when death seemed unavoidable, you can read hundreds of thousands of accounts of that, they said, at the last few seconds an inner shift happened, and suddenly I found myself deeply at peace, and there was great serenity and aliveness, and I can't explain why.

And some of these people who then faced death and escaped death became transformed completely after that death experience. They realized something when the end of the form was imminent, at those last few seconds the psychological form of me already dissolved because it was, the end of the physical was also seemed assured. So the psychological entity already died in the face of death that happens, the psychological me went, and suddenly something that is beyond the form, psychological or physical form, a deeper reality, the essence of your being, emerged and was known, and it is usually known as intense peace and aliveness, even sacredness.

And those who had near-death experiences and came back, they might have been lying on a deathbed and could already see consciousness, could, they would see the people around them, and they wanted to tell them, don't cry, this is beautiful. They had already encountered the other side of death, because if you look at it from the dissolving form, death is dreadful. Once the form has dissolved, death is an opening.

That also applies to the psychological death that is the spiritual transformation. That night I died as the psychological entity, the self, the me, the psychologically created

entity, couldn't stand this pain anymore, and so it died, it dissolved, and then I woke up, and the first thing I noticed was the peace, such peace. I had no idea that I had died, psychologically, I just knew such peace, I don't understand it.

That is the redemptive dimension, when a form dissolves, and it doesn't have to be the physical form, it can be in a spiritual death, the psychological form of me dissolves, and this is why I can talk about it. I've gone into death and realized that there is no death, it's only just the form dissolves. We don't know how many of those thousands who died violently in the last few seconds knew something deeper.

They might have spent their whole lives believing all that matters is a computer screen and my telephone calls, and be totally identified with that, and perhaps suddenly they were faced totally unexpectedly with the end of form. We don't know how many of those people in the last few seconds of their lives realized the deeper truth of who they are. Perhaps even the worst things one could watch when one watched TV was people needing to jump off.

What could be more dreadful? You don't want to commit suicide, but your choice is either to burn to death or to jump, and then you jump, and that was the most dreadful thing on one level. I'm not denying that on one level it is dreadful to watch, but if you have known death, you don't know what happened to them in the last few seconds, the turnaround of death and a deeper realization of who you are beyond form.

So this can, when death happens to you, but this collective event, whenever death happens, even those people who are not directly affected by it but are close to it, some of that redemptive dimension of death can be transmitted to them, and this has been, people who have sat with dying people have said that they themselves by facing, not denying, if you can truly sit with a dying person without denying the fact of death, because some people in the Western world will continuously deny death, and in hospitals the doctors might tell you, they know you're dying, and they say, oh, you'll be okay, you'll be fine tomorrow, and if you can truly sit with a dying person, in you too, in the face of death, although you yourself are not, something in you dies when you face death close to you, someone close to you, something dies, and when some aspect of ego goes, not perhaps the whole ego, but something in the ego is damaged, so to speak, a chunk falls out of the egoic density when you truly face death, and so those people who have truly faced death without denying it or finding explanations around it, this is, I'm talking about facing it, not explaining it away, have gone through a permanent shift. A woman I talked to a while ago told me about sitting with her dying 30-year-old son who died of cancer, and she sat there in the moment of his death in hospital, and his features became transformed in the last few moments into great serenity and almost light shining through, and she sat there without running away from it, and she said it was the most sacred experience she's ever had, and it remained something permanently shifted inside her, although the sacredness and the depth of that experience only lasted for five

minutes, after which the mind came in and began to say how dreadful it was.

But for those, the actual moment of death and a few minutes after, she was in this place of complete acceptance, completely facing it, and she went through a shift, and she knows that her dying son also went through that shift. And here an interesting phenomenon, collectively, those thousands of people died, many more thousands, family members were directly affected by that, many more millions were indirectly affected by that, because it was close to everybody, it was even close to people in Europe. My mother called me, who lives in Europe, and she cried on the telephone about it.

So it was close to many people in the world, and people have reported that behavior of people in New York, which are supposed to be, people in New York are supposed to be not very... whatever. Well, they're in a hurry, so don't stop them.

And something shifted, and strangers talked to each other, there was, somebody on TV even talked about a shift in the whole American psyche, which had been, until now, type A personality, not those people here mostly, but... And a shift away, a deepening has happened, because the nation as a whole was confronted with death. Now, the deepening will happen in a considerable number of people.

In others, the opposite effect can also happen through death, and that is a tightening and strengthening of the egoic me entity, in which case you would get, go into reactivity, and you would want to do to them, you would want to repeat the same unconsciousness that caused that total human unconsciousness, which dominated most of human history, just, it's another chapter, if you read the 20th century history, that fits in very well, although it's a little different in nature, but basically, the same madness, carry, add another chapter to the human, total, complete human unconsciousness. Facing it, without running away from it, and by facing it, the fragility of all forms, realizing there's another side to it. Be open to that, don't run away from the fact of death.

When you walk back to your cabin, all the beautiful leaves, they're dying, and yet in nature, you realize that the beauty and sacredness that there is in death. When you walk through an ancient forest, half the things that you see are rotting and dying, and yet they're not, because immediately new life arises out of that. When you walk through an ancient forest, so much decaying matter is everywhere, which is, life is inseparable from death, in the ancient forest is inseparable from life, and this is true in a deeper sense, also as far as human death is concerned.

Facing death completely is finding the life that is beyond form, facing death close to you, facing death within yourself, so there's a shift. Those who can accept a deepening will happen, is happening already in the psyche. The other movement is an egoic reaction, and let's just see which one predominates.

So far, no matter whether you agree with what the politicians have done, between that

event and now, it could have been even more unconscious, there could have been a totally unconscious reaction on the part, there was not a totally, even if you don't agree with what they've done, it was not a totally unconscious reaction. And whether you like or dislike the president, there are two words that he said in his address to Congress, five days afterwards, we were having the retreat then, may God grant us wisdom. That was a profound statement, I don't know if he himself wrote it, but he said it, and it was good that he said it.

He didn't say God grant us victory, he could have said that. So when death happens through violence and human unconsciousness, the danger is always that the reactivity can pull you into the same unconsciousness as that original act of violence. That's the challenge that faces the nation as a whole, and it's an important one because there is still the momentum of human unconsciousness.

It wasn't so long ago that Europeans more or less did what they do now in the name of religion, the Inquisition. If you didn't believe exactly what they wanted you to believe, they would kill you. That was a few hundred years ago in Europe.

And again, those people, they are so identified with mind structures and labels, I talk about obscuring the reality, the depths of this phenomenon that we call RAIN by labeling it. Imagine attaching labels to people or groups of people, you no longer sense their aliveness. This is why I said the beginning of violence is attaching a label, even a simple label like bad weather, and identify with that.

And the depth is lost. Now you attach labels to other people, whether you do it to individuals or to nations, groups, religions, tribes, and immediately, just as you deaden yourself to that, you deaden yourself to the depths, the aliveness. You've already done violence to that person by attaching labels.

And that's the essence of unconsciousness. They did it. They don't know what they do, because they're totally, they see only through the screen of conceptualization.

And the word Americans means kill, kill. They don't know that total unconsciousness. Now it's possible that America could be pulled into the same unconsciousness, in which case the label Muslim will mean the same.

That is the challenge, not to be pulled by reactivity to unconsciousness into the same unconsciousness. And a lot of it, the whole planet, a lot of how the evolution of consciousness on the planet and the arising of presence on the planet, a lot of that depends on what happens in this country. It just happens because there's such a concentration of energy here, different levels of energy.

But there's a great concentration of human energy, enormous pool of energy here. And where it goes here will be very important as far as the whole planet is concerned, which

way back into more unconsciousness or rising above to greater consciousness. For some reason, I seem to be traveling here a lot, and that's not a coincidence that the pool here is very great.

The need is very great, and the potential is very great here. So it is all connected. It was no coincidence either that we had that retreat.

Of course, when it was planned, nobody knew that these events would happen. That retreat was so close with 350, 450 originally had booked, but many couldn't make it. But still, 350 just a few days after made it somehow.

And we were in New York State, close in space and time to those events, 350 people. And many of those expressed what you express, felt that very strongly. And then the deepening happened.

They faced death and saw. They faced also during the retreat. They faced death as you sit here.

You are also facing a kind of death, but it is beautiful when the egoic entity dies, the form identity dies. I can speak of the reality of death not as a belief because I know it. The form hasn't died yet, but the psychological form died.

And later when I read accounts of people who faced death, I said, they felt they report exactly what happened to me when they faced physical death, exactly what happened to me when I faced psychological death. Isn't that interesting? It's the same, whether death is psychological or physical.

So with that comes an acceptance, not believing that death shouldn't happen, but accepting it happens. And so remember the sutra that was put up by the city council, L.A., Malibu, city council, all structures are unstable. Could we ask the next question when we meet again?

And also I have some written questions which I want to address when we, at our next gathering. So please remember if you've been standing there to come up first next when we start questions again. I trust there's no personal entity reacting.

Thank you. Thank you. Let's go back to the ever-present sound of brain and the really ever-present stillness around it.

The stillness that's around it is within and without. Strange. Spend the evening in presence as much as you can.

Presence. Maybe tomorrow I believe we're having an evening meditation also. And tonight you can perhaps after dinner spend some time in the, there's a sanctuary, beautiful meditation, building for meditation.

Or perhaps come here or be in your cabin if you don't suffer from cabin fever, which is a mind condition. If you absolutely cannot stand it, you could read one or two pages in a spiritual book. Somebody asked me at the retreat last year when we had silent period, could we play chess with my wife?

Could I play chess? I don't know enough about chess to know whether you can play chess in a state of stillness or whether the mind is totally active while you play chess. What's my next move?

Better not. So let there be noble silence. Absolutely if you need to communicate something to someone, you can, of course, you're free to do anything.

It's just a recommendation. Noble silence until tomorrow morning. Unless there's an urgent need to communicate.

If that's what you choose to do or you don't, it's fine too. And perhaps tomorrow at breakfast we could have half the tables for those who want to remain in silence and the other half of the tables for those who wouldn't mind speaking a little. If you want to remain in silence and somebody addresses you, you could go and it won't be taken personally.

There's a Zen story in which the disciple asks the master, they're walking out in nature, going on a hike, and the disciple asks the master, master, how do I enter Zen? The question means how do I enter the state of consciousness that is Zen? And the master says, how do I enter Zen?

Can you hear the sound of that mountain stream? And the disciple begins to listen. At first he doesn't hear anything because it's so distant.

He listens. Yes master, I can hear it. The master says, enter Zen from there.

And then they walk on in silence. Two hours later, by then the disciple's mind has started again. And he says, master, I've been thinking, what if I had said, no, I can't hear the mountain stream, what would you have said then?

And the master says, raising his finger, disciple, yes master, enter Zen from there. So don't let this become a bad habit. It's a bad habit.

It's a bad habit. It's a memorable experience, this retreat. The mind may want to transform it into a memorable experience.

Although there isn't that much to remember, but it might say, it was so peaceful when we were sitting there listening to the rain. At other times it was complaining about the rain, but it was peaceful. What was peaceful about it?

The fact that you could step out of thought into the state of pure attention. And no

matter where you are, you can step out of thought into the state of pure attention. So the essence of this retreat, it could never leave you.

The outer form of it evaporates quickly. When you wake up on Sunday or Monday morning in your usual surroundings, you may not even know whether you've been dreaming all this, that a week you spent in this rainy place in the middle of nature, sitting in a group of people every day and having hot tub, soaking in the hot tub. Was that all a dream or did it happen?

So quickly, the form of any experience, the experience, the form experience, so quickly, so fleeting, it's so fleeting that often you wonder, was it a dream? It was very much in the nature of a dream because it evaporated. Here I am again.

I was here before that dream and now I'm in the same bed after that dream. And then the mind may come up with erroneous judgments about that and say, so here you are back in reality. And this is an amazing and can take you very deep.

It is a meditation in itself and in a way this is very closely connected with what we've been doing, the contemplation of the awareness of how fleeting every phenomenal experience is. It's like a dream. It's like a cloud, a smoke.

It has a particular form and then it's gone. Now, because of technology, we now have means of preserving certain visual memories and auditory memories technologically in photographs and video cameras and recordings, voice recordings. And it's very important and not long ago, those things didn't exist.

And then the fleeting nature was even more obvious because you couldn't even capture the past, not even on a piece of paper. So people didn't remember what they looked like 30 years ago or what their friend or relative or looked like 30 years ago. It was gone.

It wasn't captured. It wasn't frozen on a piece of paper, which of course also fades. It lasts perhaps a little bit longer than the physical form.

And then that fades, although they've come up with new photo paper called archive paper. And the advertising slogan is, your memories may fade, but your photos should not. Of course they do in the end.

Another thing that we become very conscious of from the way they make books these days, they use paper that goes yellow very quickly and even becomes brittle after 20 or 30 years. And so many books that are made these days will be illegible in 50, 60 years' time. It's amazing to see that your own life, you have photo albums to prove that it all happened.

So in a little bit, the fleeting nature, you get the illusion by looking at a photo album or video recording that it's not really fleeting. This is all so real still. I have this heavy photo

album that I'm holding in my hands.

This is my life. That was me 20 years ago, me 15 years, me with my first husband, me with my second. And there's that continuity of me where it's just a conglomeration of forms, form experiences.

And then there's an entity that claims a personal selfhood by collecting these form experiences, certain form experiences, and holding them internally. It claims an identity out of that. That's me.

And I have a photo album to prove it, and video films, and stories to prove it. And I'll tell you about it. If you don't want to listen, I'll tell myself about it.

And how is it all going to end, this story of me, the form identity? What will the end be? Well, it's like all forms.

It's the end of all forms. In the end, the form dissolves. And so to see that, how fleeting it all is, even yesterday, last week, let alone your childhood.

Where's that? What was that? Of course, it's left traces, but the traces are in the mind and in the emotional field.

They are there now. And that is strange to contemplate. It has a dreamlike quality when you look at past, distant or recent past.

There's a dreamlike quality to it. You may have heard the famous story of the Chinese emperor who woke up one morning and called his advisors, spiritual advisors, and told them he had just been dreaming that he was a butterfly. And now he was getting scared, thinking, perhaps my existence is the dream of that butterfly.

Maybe it's the other way around. Maybe I'm a butterfly dreaming that the butterfly's an emperor, and he asks his advisors to tell him what the reality is. So closely related is our sensory experience to dreams.

And so I sometimes point, it's helpful to see that everything is already dissolving. With solid, seemingly solid objects, you don't notice that, that they're already on the road to dissolution. They seem so solid, and they may be here for, they may survive for 1,000 or 2,000 years unless they're exposed to rust or the elements.

If you saw this room speeded up on a camera so that you see 2,000 years in one minute, it would be the most amazing revelation. If you saw anything speeded up, and 2,000 years isn't much on a cosmic scale or planetary or cosmic scale, you would be a changed person if you contemplated a film showing you what happens to all forms. And if you saw it condensed into one minute, what would you see about this room?

The first thing that would dissolve is the physical bodies, like melting, like wax. Then

what would dissolve is the wooden structures becoming dust, and you would actually see it crumbling. And the last thing that would dissolve is metal that lasts longer, but eventually wind and rain would come in because the wood would, and then it would, you could see the metal going rusty and losing its solidity.

And then when the minute is over, there would still be a little bit of dust, and in the second minute the dust would be swept away. And you could see that in, and I have the similar thing when I watch old photographs, street scenes taken 40, 50, 60, 80 years ago or in the early days of photography, turn of the century, thousands of people out in the streets celebrating some political event. And now if you, European streets, there's not, in the old European cities there's not much change because the change in the stone structures is much slower than the physical bodies are more short-lived.

So you have the same London street, wherever it may be, leading to Buckingham Palace, still the same as it was in 1900, filled with thousands of people who had come to this coronation or whatever it may be, cheering. And you look at these thousands of people, they're all gone now. And the same street is filled for another coronation with thousands of people cheering.

Exactly the same buildings are still there, in many cases the same trees are still there, and these forms have been replaced by other forms. Or perhaps the busy street in New York, just after, in the 20s, I saw a picture of a freeway in LA, the early freeways of LA in the 20s, already cars, some cars had started to, freeways, cars on the freeways, a few tall buildings coming up. But all those people in those cars, in those streets, in those buildings are gone, replaced by others who are just as totally identified with their form identity and whatever they think matters in their lives, totally identified in political rallies, and then removed, and 40 years later totally different forms cheering again, political rallies.

Why am I talking about this? Because there's an amazing thing when you see the fleeting nature of forms, there is suddenly you become, what does, why is that? It could take you into despair, or it could take you into deep peace, the seeing of it.

How is it even, everything seems completely impermanent, every form. Everything is that, well, if everything were, the whole world were one particular color, everything in this world were blue, then you wouldn't know what blue is. To even recognize blue, there must be something that's not blue.

To recognize the impermanence of all things implies that there is something that is not impermanent. The recognition of impermanence, and I don't mean thinking about it, seeing it, you remember the importance of the word seeing, used in a deeper sense than just the seeing through the eyes. We talked about seeing the flower, seeing your inner states, the seeing itself is liberating.

To see the impermanent nature of forms takes you out of identification with forms, and what arises then is that which sees, that which is aware of, and that is the one thing that doesn't change, the awareness which is the now, the field of now, the knowing remains. So you can watch the forms, and the same knowing is here, when you watch these structures around you, and when you wake up in bed next week, you see different structures around you, but there's the same field of awareness through which it is known. In other words, one could say the one thing that never leaves you is this moment, the form of this moment, the depths of this moment, the depths of now beyond form, that remains unchanged, not subject to decay.

Everything else is subject to decay, or as the Buddha calls it, anitta. Anitta in Pali language, anitta, impermanence. Jesus calls it the realm where moth and rust consume, and thieves break in and steal.

Where moth and rust consume. Rust consumes the hardest, seemingly most solid thing, metal. Moths, they eat fabric, and it's consumed.

Moth and rust consume. Thieves break in and steal. Suddenly you think you own something, and it's gone.

It might not be thieves, it could be a fall in the stock market. By the way, the Dow Jones is down the bottom. That's a meditation, too.

Watching that, and suddenly, of course, it's all mental structures. One hundred billion dollars swept off the value of shares. Vapor, dream, dream world.

And what if you have a me in the Dow Jones, if you have a me investment in those figures, and you were not aware of them, and they go down, you feel diminished. And then fear comes. Am I going to make it?

I may end up with nothing. The whole thing may crash. Form identity.

Of course you end up with nothing. And when the impermanent nature of all forms is allowed to be and contemplated, there's a deepening also, seeing of that. That's why there are some of the most beautiful passages in the Old Testament are about in the impermanence of life, life forms.

The beautiful poems of the sonnets of Shakespeare, they're all about the beauty and how quickly the beauty fades. And it's about the fading of all that. It doesn't talk about anything else except how it all fades.

And it's enough to make the reading of it into a spiritual experience. Even if you never mention that there may be something that it doesn't fade, it's not necessary. Just watch how it all fades, and then you become the watching, the seeing, the field in which that happens.

And so this is why when something, some form fades or leaves you very suddenly, in other words really we are talking again, it brings us back to death. Because the fading of forms, the short-lived fleeting nature of all forms really is the fact of death. Because death is the end of form, the dissolving of a form.

And so the contemplation of that is beautiful. And when you see directly as something suddenly leaves you, a form, it leaves an emptiness. If that's not resisted, that emptiness is also fullness, great depths, intense life, formless, one consciousness.

It shines through whenever a form goes. So one could say every form obscures God. That is why at the point of death, God shines through, the light shines through.

Because that is the opening when it dissolves. So in a way every death is a flowering. It looks dreadful from the point of view of form, but it is an opening up.

Some of you have reached that age where you begin to see people around you, relatives, friends, they're beginning to die. And some people get very depressed then. One year somebody dies, next year somebody else dies.

It could be extremely depressing if you identify with a form, if you identify with forms. But if you watch that, how quickly it's all gone. And again, facing the fact of death without turning away from it, without formulating explanations or judgments, just facing it.

So there's deep wisdom in certain Buddhist traditions. Buddhist monks regularly visit the morgue where dead bodies are kept prior to burial. And they spend several hours or a day sitting there contemplating the dead bodies.

And the Western mind would say, that is weird. That is perverse. What are they doing?

It's dreadful. And yet, the Western mind is all they're doing is facing death and seeing the impermanent nature of forms. And that is the deepest meditation.

If you could be with a dead body for a few hours, not turn away from it, just become still and watch. Even a dead animal could be with you. Or when another loss occurs in your life, to be with that.

Just lost my life savings, for example. My house. Somebody left me.

Just all forms of death. And it's always an opening into life. That's the amazing thing.

Death is an opening into life. Because death is an opening death is the end of a form of life. So it's an opening into the unmanifested one life that you are.

That is the essence of all forms of life. It's an opening into that. And to the mind, which is identification with form, thought forms, it's dreadful.

So here we face death, even as we sit here. And that's the most gentle and most beautiful death that could happen to you. And that is the death that happens in the context of spiritual realization.

Because spiritual realization is this identification from form. And that is the death of form. In other words, death.

What happened to me in one night is happening to you over a slightly longer period. What was condensed into one sudden death for most of you, unless the last step is a sudden death, is a gradual dying. Dying to form.

To identifying with form. You might not even know it, sitting here. And this is why I mentioned before, something in you loves being here, and something else doesn't want to be here, because it doesn't want to die, the form identity.

But that form identity has been there for so long in humanity, and it becomes so extreme that one can describe it as a form of insanity. Not being able to come to total ignorance of who you are beyond this little form of body and psychological form. No idea that there's any.

And then of course, whatever this form does, any action that this form takes, any thought that this form thinks, any doing, is going to be motivated by that primary delusion and ignorance. It will seek to strengthen through its deeds and its thoughts, it will seek to strengthen continuously that illusion, that illusory identity. That's why motivation for most people is to strengthen their sense of me, through adding more to me, looking for me, in more future, more this, more that, me.

So all action, even if it looks great on the surface, there is the primary delusion and ignorance that the essence of who you are is beyond form, flows then into every action, its deluded action. And it flows into every relationship. Whatever, you can't go anywhere without expressing in some way that delusion.

And that explains the madness of human history. In some places more mad than others. There are certain places on the planet where even now they are focal points of human madness.

Not that other places are not mad, but in some places the madness is obvious and visible in a more concentrated form. Places of continuous conflict, continuous fighting. It's been going on for hundreds of years.

And again, it is the human mind, there's nothing personal in it. You can see the madness in Northern Ireland. It goes on and on and on.

Why are they marching through the streets? They have to march through these streets to celebrate a battle 300 years ago, 400 years ago when they killed more people than

the others, the other side. And they have to walk through these streets.

Why? Why? They don't know exactly why, but of course it gives them their identity.

In the absence of knowing who you are, you need to hang on to something and that gives you your collective identity and you have to reaffirm who you are collectively as our group. And so you have to march through these streets and if you have to kill people to do it, you have to do it because it's your survival, me. So it's not, it is the essence of human insanity.

And this is only one example. Others identified with other religions as me, the other. And it's the essence of human insanity.

They need their enemies because that strengthens the form identity of me. And so they are thankful to their enemies. In reality, the extreme Muslims who express that extreme form of not so much religion but ideology, ideas in the mind, they are extremely grateful for the existence of America because it defines their sense of identity.

They don't clearly see that, of course. So you will do all kinds of mad things to find yourself. And then our society does other mad things.

You may find yourself looking for yourself in shopping malls. You're born, your sense of self is born into a new garment that you buy, a new acquisition. And you go, for some people it's compulsive.

Why is it compulsive? They're looking for themselves. And they're walking around the shopping mall not knowing they're looking for a strengthened sense of self.

Where am I? And then they open magazines. And the magazines are not selling you goods and articles.

They are selling you, mostly if you look at ads, they're selling an identity, an enhanced identity. That's how all the goods are packaged. If they were selling you just the goods, nobody would be very interested because deprived of a sense of identity, it's nothing much.

It's water with a fragrance in it. It's nothing without the identity around it. So the advertising people, although they themselves are trapped in an illusion, somehow they cooperate with that illusion.

Maybe they don't know it's an illusion. They probably think that's all there is, so we might as well use it. So they know about it, and then they are selling you an identity.

Or sometimes, yes, feeling good, feeling better about yourself. That's what they... And that's the...

Everybody is trapped in that. And if it's not that, maybe you are trapped in that for a few years. And then there's a feeling of purposelessness.

You have walked around shopping malls for five years, ten years, not found yourself. And then you get your first spiritual book. And suddenly you say, oh, there is something else.

I could perhaps... I could become enlightened. And then you start looking for yourself there.

No, that's maybe... You're already... You're moving perhaps a little bit towards something more real, but not very much yet.

Because there's again a looking for an enhanced identity through becoming bigger than I am now. More important than I am now. More perfect than I am now.

Adding something, because I am now. One thing is clear. This isn't enough.

So the search continues, and the search always implies future. Future. Looking for the more.

Looking for that which you can add to. Not realizing that nobody ever found themselves by adding to themselves. Nobody ever found themselves when life suddenly gave them everything.

If you read reports of people who stumbled upon spiritual realization accidentally, so to speak, they will all say that they found themselves when the opposite happened. Not when things were added, but when things left. Including ideas in the mind that they had formulated and built an identity around that crumbled also in the face of loss or death.

So when things left you, and seemingly left you with no thing, nothing, then suddenly spiritualization happened. In other words, that was already there. Underneath all those accumulations, mental accumulations, the truth and fullness and reality of who you are in your essence was already completely there.

And it only became revealed to them. They only knew it when at the point of self-diminishment, not at the point of self-growth. So this is why I sometimes point out our gatherings are not personal growth.

They're sometimes in books, sometimes I think even The Power of Now might carry, they have little categories so that bookshops know where to put them. It says personal growth. Of course, it's not that at all.

It's personal shrinkage. But then the bookshops don't have a section for that. And how many people would go to that section if they had it?

What are you interested in? In shrinkage, personal shrinkage. Oh, no.

And everything in this form identity resists that shrinkage. It resists and it finds its heights against any, even a threat of diminishment of me. It does not, because it feels it's its own death and on the level of form it is.

So you can see how the diminishment is constantly fought against. It's an unconscious movement. You can watch it in yourself and in others where how the need, the unconscious need to stand out, to express what your opinions are, to fight your mental position, put it forward.

And if anybody, you can see that diminishment, if anybody questions that your opinion might not be the right one, there's already the threat of diminished sense of self. Because your opinion, when you identify with it, gives you a sense of self, mental positions, perspectives. Your me, yourself is in that mind structure.

And that person suddenly attacks your position and there's enormous, because you're seeing yourself, coming towards you is a threat of diminishment. You might even be wrong. And when people are totally identified with the mental position and they start arguing about their mental positions, very soon you reach a point where you no longer care whether your mental position is the truth or not.

Because you're not defending the truth, you're defending an identity. And you would even come up with lies so that you can maintain that mental position. And your identity goes with it.

So that your sense of self is not diminished. And it happens in the most seemingly insignificant circumstances, that diminishment of self. I've given this example before and because it's so common, everybody can verify it in their own experience.

Somebody insults you, and this may happen in traffic, and shouts at you, you idiot. Or something like that. That remark takes something from you.

It diminishes the sense of who you are. You feel diminished when somebody calls you something. And automatically, and unconsciously, you would immediately, the mind would repair that diminishment by shouting something back.

And on that level it works. You feel a little bit better because you shouted something back. You have repaired a diminished sense of self.

So it's interesting, and this is just a tiny example of how that works. Now, what a beautiful spiritual practice is, not to resist diminishment. And of course, there have been many things, many spiritual teachings, teachers, Christian, Buddhists, have spoken about it.

And that is the deeper meaning of Jesus' saying, turning the other cheek, is not to resist, because that is a diminishment, of course. Not to resist a diminished sense of self. Not

immediately rushing into a repair job.

And that's an amazing thing. When you find that, maybe you can practice it driving, the next time somebody shouts something at you. Not repair, except a diminished sense of self, because it's an illusion.

Anyway. So really, you are there faced with a diminished illusion. And just look.

You idiot. Oh. Or suddenly in an argument, drop your position.

Because maybe you don't, maybe the other person's right. Who knows? I don't know.

Even to say, I don't know, you feel a little bit less. Because when you know, you're greater. I know.

Just ask me. And in not knowing, there's less of you. Oh.

I don't know. And again, something inside you resists that. So, the most beautiful thing is, suddenly when a diminished self is not resisting, it's not resisting, it's immediately repaired, you suddenly sense an enormous, deep seated power.

That is also very peaceful, but enormously deep and vast. That is what is concealed underneath the illusory sense of self. A great depth and power and aliveness.

So you have in certain Christian teachings, ancient Christian teachings, strange sayings like, don't defend yourself when they accuse you. It doesn't, I'm not saying always follow literally this, this is just a pointer. There may be times when you speak up.

But just a pointer towards something. Jesus even has, be happy when they accuse you and talk behind your back, talk badly about you. Be glad.

It's in the Sermon on the Mount. Something like that. When, basically in the Sermon on the Mount, when seemingly bad things happen to you, you're blessed.

It's a turnaround of how one would usually interpret. Such, so revolutionary was that teaching that came with Jesus. And then you have the same truth that was recognized and then was formalized.

And when a deep truth is formalized, there's a little danger that comes in. For example, the truth of no self, diminished self is recognized and then you create a school where people enter in order to live in that way, non-self based. You become a monk or nun.

You shave your head, all designed to remove identification with form. You shave your head, you give away your clothes, you put on a not very nice, relatively cheap garment. Both Christianity and Buddhism do that.

You have a new name, not your old name because you want to let go of that. And you

become humble, not seeking any ambition. Well, that's the idea behind it.

Now the moment it becomes formalized, there is the danger that you adopt a new sense of self based on the form of that. In other words, in certain Buddhist countries, Buddhist monk is a good career, respected. And so you become a Buddhist.

Quickly you have given up your identity and instead of truly entering that diminished sense of self, you get a heightened sense of self because you're really superior to all these householders. Of course you are. Very subtle.

The sense of self that is mind based, very subtle. If you abandon it here, it comes back there. You've heard about the rabbi and the priest who were sitting worshipping in Jerusalem, worshipping God together.

And the rabbi said, suddenly was overcome by the nothingness and the rabbi shouted, oh God, I am nothing. I am nobody. There's only God.

I am nobody. And the priest suddenly is also overcome by the presence of God, the one, and shouts, I am nobody. I am nobody.

And a street sweeper who has been sweeping the streets a few steps away hears them and stops sweeping the streets and suddenly shouts, I am nobody. I am nobody. And the rabbi looks to the priest and points at the street sweeper and says, look who thinks he's nobody.

That's how quickly a form identity can persist. After you've realized your nobodiness, it claims an identity out of the nobodiness. Just one more example.

A few people sitting around discussing some topic, maybe spiritual. You can sense sometimes the impulse to put forward your position. And you can try out sometimes not to put forward your position.

Just be there as a spacious presence instead of asserting your existence, standing out, needing to stand. Exist means to stand out. Ex means out.

Here, that's me. Instead of asserting your existence, be there as an opening. Far more powerful.

And if words should ever come out of that opening, they will be very different in aliveness and quality than words that come out of a sense of self needing to strengthen itself. That's mind interaction. So it doesn't mean you will never say anything again, but suddenly words come from a deeper level, if they do come, not to strengthen an identity or defend an identity.

Words coming from egoic identity. Sometimes words may arise out of presence. Any spiritual discourse, if it's true spiritual discourse arises, these words arise out of

presence, not accumulated knowledge.

Although I speak about the same things all the time, basically I only speak about one thing all the time, and I have that strange feeling it's always new. And some people who come to all talks also sense that newness, because they've heard the words in one form or another before, but it comes out of the field of presence. There's an aliveness to that.

And you will find that yourself when you speak from presence, those words carry an energy frequency that is more than that which the words signify. In usual speech and discourse, the meaning of the words is in the word. They signify, or the words are little symbols, signifiers.

The symbols are decoded by the mind. When the words come through your ears, reach the brain, the mind, and then they are decoded, the language is decoded, and that's the meaning. With spiritual discourse there is an added dimension to the words.

They carry the energy frequency of presence. It's not just the meaning, it goes deeper. So the same words could be repeated, and they still work because they reach a deeper level within yourself that is beyond mind.

Unless your mind is so dense that the words get trapped when they reach the mind, they cannot go beyond the mind. They get trapped in the mesh of mind, and the mind plays around with them. It says, OK, he said that, but that doesn't agree with the scriptures, Buddhist scriptures, and the sutras say that, so there's a contradiction here.

The mind, the words, the energy that's in the words cannot then go beyond the mesh of mind. It gets stuck in here. And so sometimes people sit for an hour or two, and I can see they become not here because you've been sitting for so long, and they become, I can see they become restless, and they go, oh, foot movements.

It's not, the words don't go deeper than there, and they've listened for long enough. And then there are others who sit still, and I can see the words go, yes, they are heard. The mind decodes the words, and then they sink deeper, and then those words can awaken the words and the energy around in the words.

And even in books it can work like that. It's a mystery how that happens. Certain books are spiritually empowered, not that many, because the words came out directly out of presence, and you, after a while, and this is a good point, many of you have probably reached the point, you can pick up a book in a bookshop, read a page or half a page, and sense whether this book contains spiritual power or not.

It may still be very interesting and useful even if it doesn't contain spiritual power, but there's a difference, and you can sense that difference as you read just a few lines. And after a while you may still read certain books because they are interesting, but there are many spiritual books that you don't need to buy anymore, except those that contain that

power, that come out of presence, because the other books give you information, which up to a point, in other words, they can give you useful signposts, but not empowered. That's the difference.

So you can save a lot of money in that way, just open it and read a few lines. I will talk about a few questions that came to me, written questions. One question is related to what we've just been talking about, and that is words arising in your mind as you sit here, where do they come from?

In the breathing practice, high-sounding words often arise. For example, on the breath, the Spirit of God makes me, I think it says, on the out-breath, the breath of the Almighty is my life. On the in-breath, as my eye is single, still, my body is filled with light on the out-breath.

I am not a body, or I am not a pain body. On the in-breath, I am free. Those words arise during the breathing practice to this person.

Although these words or pointers appear to be uplifting, I suspect they may be mental noise in disguise, sneaking in through the side door. Could you please clarify this? Well, of course, it is mental noise.

There are certain words or statements that are useful pointers to the truth. These words all point to the source. They don't point away from the source.

They point to the source. They are not the truth, but they point to it. So, why not allow them?

And if ever other words should arise that point away from the truth, they are recognized as mental noise, and also allowed, because you can't fight the mind. You recognize the mind. You recognize the mind.

So, to have a gentle relationship with the mind, and if words come up during your meditation practice, allow them. See if they are pointers to the truth, and if they are, they always point into stillness. They always point there.

Some of you may know this huge book called The Course in Miracles, full of words. Huge book. It takes months to read it.

It takes one year to practice all the lessons. But as you reach the end, all the words point back to the truth, and at the very end, it takes you into stillness. Stillness are the last pointers, the last lessons, and it says the use of words is almost over now.

And then the last lessons take you beyond words into stillness. So, any useful pointer that points back to the source points towards the stillness, and that's beautiful. So, there's no need to be concerned with words that arise.

If they are useful pointers, that's beautiful. Other words that point somewhere else, it might be saying, what's the point in all this? There's mental noise.

It comes, and it goes. So, not to undervalue if useful insights come and take the form of thought, can be very beautiful. You can suddenly have deep insights after coming out of stillness, after a period of stillness, suddenly a realization, a deep insight comes.

You honor that also, because you honor the world of form also. You don't dismiss it. You may even write it down.

This is a beautiful pointer. It may even help others. Don't write books prematurely after experiencing stillness for a few days.

Write a book about it. Some Western people immediately rush to, okay, I'm going to write a book about it. My publisher here at New World Library, he said, they get manuscripts every day, lots of manuscripts, people who've just had one spiritual insight and an experience of stillness, whatever it is, and immediately they had to write a book about it.

Instead of waiting, wait a little, let it mature, and let life challenge you and see whether this inner transformation is there in the face of challenges. It may well come to you that I'm free now. I often get people write to me or call me and say, I'm free, and it's wonderful.

I never say, oh, maybe you're not. I want them to be free, and if they are not free, life will show them that they are not. A challenge will come, and the challenge may pull you back into a little self.

But then that's useful, too. Two very similar questions here about things happening in the body as presence arises. For some time now, I have these intense energy experiences.

My body gets filled with energy to the point I almost feel I could explode. If I had to name it, I'd call it ecstasy. But even this isn't right.

It is like a fire burning yet without heat. All words are inadequate. Sometimes it is blissful.

Sometimes the intensity is extremely uncomfortable. Often I become exhausted. Even in the midst of this experience, the mind doesn't stop its compulsive thinking.

There's a great push-pull. Could you please offer some guidance? And I'll read one other question and can see how closely they are by somebody else, how closely they are related.

I have two experiences occurring frequently during presence that I haven't heard you

mention. One is that I feel my upper body and head are filling with gas, for lack of a better description. In other words, similar to the previous, intense.

And it creates enormous pressure, especially in my head. This happened first while in your presence at Tucson and has been occurring regularly since that time. It brought us on uncomfortable.

Again, that's similar to the previous question. Also, I have only what I can describe as intense melting sensations. They come in waves, can last for quite a while, and are associated with this great sweetness and intense longing.

Should I be working with these experiences in some way or just watching them? So you can see it is not uncommon for people to have intense energy experiences in the body. Because an enormous amount of life energy is freed when it's no longer.

The energy arises when you sit in presence. Presence means energy that was trapped in thought structures, consciousness, awareness that was trapped in thinking. Because for most people, thought consumes a large part of their life.

Almost their entire consciousness is continuously born into thought forms. And useless and compulsive thinking, which is 90% of human thought, uses up enormous energy and is emotions associated with useless and compulsive thinking about me, my story, my past, my future, problems. So it's like sitting in a car and pushing down the accelerator, but you're not going anywhere.

You're in neutral, but the engine is revving. You're lying in bed at three in the morning. No action.

You're not taking any action because there's nothing you can do at this moment, but there are problems everywhere up here. And you try to solve them somehow and feel you're not responsible if you are not worrying about this. I heard a famous actress, I read about some years ago, I remember in a magazine, a famous actress said about her, her child was ill.

And she said, I wouldn't be human if I didn't worry myself sick about it. That's a belief. It is a belief that I need to worry.

I'm not responsible if I worry. This, by the way, is an actress who is continuously ill. Worry myself sick about it.

That is what makes me human. So that is compulsive thinking, and it erodes the aliveness of who you are, because all life energy moves into thought, and then emotions that accompany those mostly fearful thoughts. But when the egoic thought structures are working, there's always fear underneath, because you're identified with an illusion, trying to protect and strengthen the illusory identity.

And that's why thought is so compulsive. So you experience fear in the body, and the turmoil in the head, and that uses up your aliveness. And when suddenly presence arises, then an enormous amount of energy suddenly floods through your body.

For some people it happens the moment they pay attention, they put attention into the inner body, there's an enormous amount of energy suddenly in the body. And while they sit here, that can become almost unpleasant, almost too much to bear. But you can bear it.

Instead of trying to fix it in some way, contain that. Be greater than that energy movement. Contain the energy movement.

Also through a deep allowing. It knows what it's doing. Let it happen.

If you fight it, you often make it worse. Deep allowing. And you can hold your hands like this.

It helps, because that's the allowing attitude or gesture. And then you may get, after a while, a higher vibrational frequency is no longer so strange, and will no longer produce such uncomfortableness. You become adjusted to it, that increased aliveness.

You know what it feels like when you've cut off your blood. You've been sitting in a particular way, and your leg has gone asleep, so to speak. You've cut off your sensations, the blood flow has been cut off.

And then you get up, and suddenly you notice you can't walk for a while, and there's a moment of intense discomfort as blood rushes back into that part of the body. Energy is rushing back in where before there was almost nothing left. This is just an analogy, what happens after energy has been cut off.

Suddenly energy rushes back in, can be very uncomfortable. The secret to any experience is allowing. Allowing it to be, and be the space in which even bodily experiences happen.

And sometimes the mind then reacts to this, and starts figuring out what's happening. Allow it to happen. Now the strange thing is, presence can arise even while there is still mind activity.

And this applies to these situations, like this one, when you sit in an energy field of presence, that is at times very intense, and even if your mind has not stopped very much, because the energy field of presence in which you sit pulls presence out of you, your own presence. Even if your mind hasn't quietened, it's still just as active as before, and nevertheless in these situations, like retreats or spiritual intensives, talks, suddenly enormous amount of presence arises, even though the mind hasn't stopped. That's an amazing thing.

Your mind doesn't even need to stop, and when you sit in a group where there's a collective energy field of presence, presence will arise anyway. Subsequently, as presence arises, it will be easier to go beyond identification with mind. But for a while, you may experience both presence arising and the same old mind still going on.

And that is a benefit of group situations like this one. Something that otherwise would only happen to you if the mind became quite still, if you were alone, can happen here, even though the mind hasn't stopped yet. So it's a simultaneous event.

The old continues, and while the old continues, the new is arising at the same time. That's why it's so beautiful to come to a collective field of presence, and why it is so helpful. So I sometimes compare this transition from the old state of consciousness to the new with the caterpillar and the butterfly, which is the strangest phenomenon, when a caterpillar reaches the end of its lifespan as a caterpillar, and suddenly a butterfly emerges out of that.

This is an amazing miracle. And there comes a point, I am sure, when if the caterpillar had a mind, which it doesn't, it just happens, but if the caterpillar had a mind and could speak and think about what's happening, the caterpillar would reach a point of great discomfort. The discomfort would be with being a caterpillar just isn't working anymore, and the discomfort of the old, which has already half gone beyond the old, and then something new, very new coming in, which it doesn't know anything about.

And that's the point where I would say, what I often say, humans, the madness, the insanity of the human mind. And then somebody asked me not long ago, well, if the human mind is insane, the one consciousness has created all this, is born into forms, the one consciousness is also born into the sad mind forms. How could it be otherwise?

If there's only one consciousness, which expresses itself through billions of forms, whereas is born into forms, how could the insane human mind be separate from that? So the insanity of the human mind is then also a creation of that one consciousness. So how can we even call it insanity?

This was the question that this person asked me, and it's a good question. Is not this also part of the one? Is not this?

Yes. When I say, we'll see the insanity of the human mind, it addresses that situation from a particular perspective, not from the highest perspective. And again, to compare it with a caterpillar, if the caterpillar had a human mind, and came to the end of its life as a caterpillar, he would discover, he can't walk very well anymore as a caterpillar.

Many things don't work anymore in my life as a caterpillar. My existence as a caterpillar doesn't make sense anymore. And from the point of view of that evolutionary transition, it would be true to say for the caterpillar, that my existence just isn't working anymore.

This is mad. From an overall higher perspective, because no single statement can contain the whole truth. Any statement that is made through the human mind can only be a fragment of the truth.

Sometimes people expect me to utter the absolute truth, and they say, no, that doesn't make sense. Of course it doesn't. Every utterance is only a fragment.

And sometimes you have to consider the seemingly opposite perspective and utterance, and hold them both together to find the truth that is beyond the fragmentary nature of mind. So to say that the human mind is insane is a fragment of the truth, but not the entire truth, as no statement is. But it is a helpful fragment, because you are at that stage of the caterpillar where the caterpillar would say, it just isn't working anymore.

And there's no point. My existence as a caterpillar has become pointless. What now?

So, and then the new comes in. But recognizing that its existence has become meaningless on that level is part of the transition for the caterpillar. So it's right for the caterpillar to recognize that, because that is part of the transition.

It's right for humans to recognize the insanity of the human mind. From an overall perspective, there's absolutely nothing wrong with the insanity of the human mind. All is exactly as it should be at this moment.

There's nothing that is not right, and that is from the highest perspective that is true to say. Including all the madness of human history, but that's a distant, a more distant viewpoint of the totality. It is as it is to see that, and yet not get lost in that perspective either.

Not get lost in any one viewpoint or perspective, so that you have to see your own insanity. There it is. Some teachings say, there's nothing you can do.

All spiritual practice is pointless. If it happens, it happens. You are who you are.

It's a fragment of the truth, but if you believe in that, it won't take you to the truth. So develop the ability to hold in your awareness different mental perspectives and different pointers that may all be pointing to the truth, but from different levels. And you are greater than any mental perspectives.

You don't identify with one mental perspective and say, this is the truth. So you can contain many viewpoints and perspectives. And hold them, not for one and against the other.

Hold, because that is the vastness of awareness in which thought happens. Hold that. Can you hear the sound of the rain?

There are other questions on these papers by the same people. I will come to them. One

more question is a little one.

How will we know when we have truly transcended so we don't go out and write that book prematurely? Well, simple. Just wait a little.

Wait a little. There's a beautiful account in that book, *Mystics, Masters, Saints, and Sages*, about fortunately I've forgotten her name. She had a liberating realization when she was working in a nearby town here in a canning factory.

And in the back room of the factory, suddenly she had this beautiful description. And before she had had other liberating experiences, and she went to her teacher two or three times and said, is this it? And the teacher said to her, wait, wait.

And she went on. And a year later, she went back to the teacher, is that it? And the teacher said, just wait, wait.

And finally the deepening, it happened then once and for all, she became liberated from mind in the back room of the canning factory. And she describes it beautifully, if you have the book. Read it.

Read it. That beautiful description of that disidentification from form. And so several times her teacher said, wait, don't jump into something prematurely.

And when you think you're enlightened, wait. That's all. If you're not, then life will show you soon, very soon, that it's not you're still identified with form.

And there's nothing wrong with that. It's beautiful. Life is showing you something.

If you think you're enlightened, life will challenge you. It will challenge you in any way. But particularly if you think you're enlightened, life will soon give you some challenge.

And then you either, there's surrender and non-resistance. The challenge is met in that state of openness that is surrender and non-resistance to what is, with great power, of course, met with that power that comes with that state. Or the challenge draws you back into identification with form and the contraction happens.

Reactivity of the me happens. And so, and that's all, you see. Oh, okay.

There it is again, identification with, okay. So wait a little bit longer. But only the challenges can show you.

If you shut yourself off in a room and let's say somebody brings you food every day and you're not challenged, it is possible, nor guaranteed, that you might suddenly enter an extremely peaceful, deep state and think that's it. And then you have to leave that room and encounter situations and people again and then show you whether that's this permanent state or not. It's easy to fool oneself when not being challenged.

But for most people, life doesn't allow that anyway. You can't walk around life not being challenged. And even in your room, you would probably be challenged by your mind and your pain body, even if you don't see anybody.

So that's all beautiful in how it should be. So the wait is a useful pointer. Wait a little.

And don't rush into doing or writing a book. At some point, perhaps writing will come. Perhaps it will be useful to many people, what your particular insight that may help many people.

And at some point, it may come. But waiting is important. In old traditions like Zen and other traditions, often after realization, they would wait for years before they would start teaching.

The master would say, okay, just wait and do ordinary jobs for years. And it matures. The realization is not immediately externalized as a powerful teaching stream, as was the case with me when after realization, I couldn't have taught immediately.

I had nothing to say. How can I help this person? They're asking.

I don't know. I'm completely at peace, whereas before I was always in turmoil. That's all I know.

I couldn't have explained very much at first. Gradually, it took time for the realization to become externalized through words and even through an external energy stream as a teaching. Probably, it's impossible to say when I started teaching as such, if you can even call it that.

There was never a formal beginning. But at least, before I even had any little groups, was at least eight or ten, eight years after. So for quite a few years after, I was just there as nobody.

Yes, once, occasionally people would ask, somebody would come and ask a few questions. And gradually, what I could say became a little bit more useful. At first, nothing much, then a little bit more useful.

And then recognizing the truth in ancient spiritual texts, that was beautiful. And that added to my ability to teach, because the inner state recognized the core of truth in many ancient teachings immediately through the words. But the teachings also shed some light on what had happened to me.

So there was a mutual, two-way recognition. The inner state recognized immediately the truth, but the way in which that truth was expressed different ways enabled me to understand a little bit more about what had happened. And that was helpful.

Although later, as every true, genuine teaching is not just a repetition of one form of

teaching. There's always a new quality to it which arises out of that particular, through that particular form. So many of you are destined to teach.

All of you are destined to teach, not necessarily directly. Anyone in whom presence arises begins to teach in an indirect way, simply because you live in such a way that the reactivity of the ego acts less and less upon your life. So it spreads.

Whether or not, or when you will teach directly, or in whatever form, that will emerge very clearly. And it could be soon. There is an acceleration now of presence coming through.

So for many it may not be years anymore as it used to be. Nevertheless, weight is still a useful pointer. Some of you may go hiking if your rain gear is good enough this afternoon.

You may go to the beautiful trails into the forest. If you do, or whatever you do, bring that alertness. Don't just go for another hike.

Bring the alertness into it. Maybe you'll walk a little bit more slowly than you would usually do. And be the watcher.

Bring the alertness to sense perceptions, listening, hearing. Be a walking field of alert presence. Not a heavy person with a heavy past and future, or think about the Dow Jones.

Be an alert presence walking through the woods. And it's all in the presence. Death, nature, a lot of it is dying now.

Such intense aliveness in that death. The colors, so vibrant, such intensity. Or you go into the hot tub.

What a wonderful opportunity to be in no thought. Merge with the heat. Simple, alive presence.

Complete stillness. Who needs a hot tub? If you still do, it's there.

It's wonderful when you don't need it anymore. You're in a continuous hot tub. So use this afternoon for presence practice, no matter where you go.

Be aware. This is a reminder. You cannot be reminded often enough.

As you bring that intensity to your sense perceptions, don't get lost in the sense perceptions. There's the sense beauty, yes. But sense the stillness through which you perceive.

The field that makes the perception possible. And you may have heard me quote my

favorite Upanishad written a long, long time ago in India. Not that which the eye sees, but that whereby the eye can see.

Know that to be Brahman, the eternal, and not what people here adore. Not that which the ear hears, but that whereby the ear can hear. Know that to be Brahman, the eternal, and not what people here adore.

Not that which the mind thinks, but that whereby the mind can think. Know that to be Brahman, know that alone to be Brahman, the eternal, and not what people here adore. There's the rain.

The ear hears it. And yet, that's not it. Not that which it's beautiful, but what shines through the sense perception.

Not that which the ear hears, but that whereby the ear can hear. Knowing the ground in which the form arises makes you recognize the sacredness of not just of the ground, but also of the form. When the form is perceived without knowing the ground out of which it arises, it is not sacred.

It's only a form which you may desire or fear or be indifferent towards. But when you perceive a form knowing the ground out of which it arises, then all forms are sacred. The sacredness is recognized, including your own.

Not knowing that ground, you're lost in form, in your own form reacting to other forms, desiring or fearing other forms. Lost. That's the secret of human existence.

Stay for a little while in this field before the body moves. We will meet again when the clock shows the number eight for our evening meditation. This morning you woke up and there was the sound of the rain again.

You may have seen a film called Groundhog Day. And those of you who haven't seen it, it's about a man who due to some time warp gets trapped in the same day. And every morning wakes up on the same day.

And he hates it. And he tries to commit suicide several times, he does commit suicide several times, and after suicide he wakes up on the same day. And that goes on for hundreds of days, it's the same day, until finally he lives in continuous fear and resistance.

He hates everything and everybody. And nobody likes him, of course. And then after trying suicide, it doesn't work either, surrender comes in very late.

Nothing else works. And suddenly he welcomes that day and every moment in that day and every person who appears in that day and becomes an enormous, powerful good in this little town where that happens. And everybody loves him.

And then he re-experiences that more and more fully and he doesn't want to leave anymore. And then the next morning he wakes up and he's out of that day. So let's see what happens tomorrow morning.

Watch for the sound of the rain whether it's there or not. So it's beautiful to see sometimes when spiritual truth comes through the media, occasionally it happens, films and so on. So there's deep truth in this that things don't change until you surrender to now.

Until you don't want them to change anymore, you don't need them to change. The need isn't there, the psychological need. And there's also the deep truth in here that what you experience as your life isn't determined so much by what happens to you because what happens to this man is the same every day.

The only thing that changes is how he interacts with what happens. So what determines your life is not what happens to you, but how you react or respond to what happens. React or respond.

In the way I use the words, reaction is the conditioning of the old and then you're forced to repeat the same day basically. Many people go through life basically, they relive the same day because they live, they interact with the world through their conditioning which is the same. So it's the same day basically.

Even if geographically the scenery changes and even the people are interchangeable, it's still the same one marriage, the next marriage and another marriage, whatever it is, basically the same until freedom arises from conditioning and then you respond instead of react. And responding happens out of presence and responding never opposes or fights what is. Reaction usually does.

It welcomes and then action happens. Thank you for that beautiful card, Halloween card, thank you. Everything flows, nothing remains, it says.

Heraclitus or Heraclitus, Heraclitus. Thank you. I believe he lived at the same time as the Buddha more or less, ancient Greek philosopher.

Deep insights. As you sit here and listen to the questions, there are some very good questions. Be in the body.

Some attention in the inner energy field of body. Be in the mind. Increasingly you will find all answers that you need come from within you.

And I can see that somehow sometimes with some questions you already know the answer but you still ask the question. If it's a true question and you give it stillness, you enter the stillness after asking the question, then the answer will come. If it's not a true question, the question dissolves in the stillness.

Not a true question means a mind-made question that once is designed to make you think more or figure something out that on the level of mind has no answer. I wonder, but what if? What if?

What would if that? Shouldn't we? Shouldn't they?

How does this compare with that? What's going to happen when? Why?

Of course the mind asks why. I believe it's in Gestalt therapy where why questions are regarded as dirty questions or something like that. It's another why question.

I believe he says, Fritz Perls, you're avoiding this moment. Dear Eckhart, thank you for your presence. Thank you.

Presence. Thank you for presence. I have moments here of extreme joy and also my mind seems to be racing, jammering on and on.

Perhaps I am just noticing it more. There's no real suffering in it unless I say I must stop it. Perhaps there is no question.

With much love and gratitude to you. Thank you. So the question in a way already contains the answer.

The mind still goes on and on. There's no suffering in it, however, unless I say I must stop it. That's a significant change to allow even the mind to go on and on.

And the mind, as presence arises, no longer has the ability to make you suffer. It still goes on and on. But when it has lost the ability to make you suffer, total identification with the mind is no longer there.

Yes, the mind has its momentum. And yet, there is a witnessing presence that knows that the mental noise is going on and on. There's no longer total identification, total belief in every thought that goes on and on.

Therefore, there's no real suffering anymore. That also is the arising of presence. It's not necessarily the case that the mind stops immediately.

The mind has its momentum and presence arises. It can happen, of course, that the mind stops totally if there's presence. But there is the simultaneous movement.

The momentum of the mind can still be there. And yet, presence is also arising. Then, total identification with mind is broken and it doesn't make you suffer anymore.

And it's not a problem anymore. It's just more mental noise. And also, there's less and less a sense of self invested in the mental noise of me.

So, that's wonderful. So, then there's nothing wrong with the mind. It is the human mind

with its momentum.

And then, when you accept it, go totally in that way, of course, like with everything else, total acceptance changes everything. What is real in total acceptance deepens and the rest dissolves. So, in this point, when you reach that point that is wonderful where the mind, whatever thought you think, no longer has the power to make you suffer.

Because if you look at suffering, how much of that is derived from thoughts that you think about a situation, a person, yourself, an event, life, the world, this or that, and completely believe in it, not realizing it is a perspective. It may not even be the absolute, an absolute lie, but a fragment, a perspective. Anybody here could adopt the perspective and talk to us about their lives and justify the beliefs that they are the most miserable creatures, the creature here.

You adopt a particular perspective on your life, and then you shift. You could also express the opposite perspective. So, you have a loose relationship with thought, not clinging there, clinging to thought.

A loose thought is there. So, that question implies that there is a witnessing presence. That's all that's needed.

I love this earth, the physical, sensual side of life, juicy, wild, tantric. When you talk, I sometimes wonder if I go there, I lose this delicious side of life, detached from that. What to do about that?

It's fun here. We have addressed already, being able to truly enjoy the phenomenal world implies that there's a depth to all your perceptions, the depth of stillness, of the unmanifested, and then you can enjoy the manifested more, but in a different way. While you enjoy the manifested, it's beautiful.

You're not going to lose any of that. If anything, it'll deepen. Certain things you may no longer enjoy that's possible.

So, there's nothing as long as you enjoy, it's fine. But realize that if there's joy in any activity, sometimes it's good to go to the place of joy directly so that it doesn't get bound up with one particular thing or form. If being with a person, joy arises, which is an aspect of love, occasionally close your eyes and go there directly.

If you're out in nature and joy arises, go there. Where is the joy? Go there directly and then let go of the forms.

Now, it is true that those who have gone very deeply sometimes lost interest in all physical things because they went to the source of everything, being itself, the sweetness, the joy, the depth of being, beingness itself. And when they looked upon the world, it seemed like, sometimes one way I can put also how I sense this world, the

sense-perceived world and sense experiences are enjoyable, but the sense of being, there's such depth in there that very much that seems like the cream and the world and the experiences of the world feel like skimmed milk. And skimmed milk is fine too.

So, there you have heard probably of sages in India, not in the West because there are probably people in the West to whom this also happened, who lost interest totally in the external world. And in India they sat by a cave or an old temple and didn't move anymore, totally immersed in the bliss of being. Unfortunately, the West, they would have put them away.

And they probably did to quite a few. In India, they left them where they were, and some people gave them food, and sometimes they never came out of that. At other times, they came out of it and were able again to interact with form.

So that's recognized and respected in that ancient culture. But the West on being totally trapped in form, to the West that's only, it must be insanity it says. So there can be a loss of balance in sometimes, particularly if being emerges suddenly, you suddenly plunge into the depths of the aliveness of just of beingness.

And you're engulfed, swallowed up one could say, by that. It happened to me not to such an extreme, they didn't put me away, but if I had gone a little bit further, they would have put me away. Complete loss of interest in things.

Now, I didn't lose anything because there was the cream there, the cream of everything that is in any pleasure, you get diluted. Any pleasure temporarily frees you from the inner striving towards needing to get somewhere for a moment. There's a cessation of that pull into future, and some joy arises.

But that is the pleasure, joy manifesting as pleasure, and it's attached to a form. For a moment the form is so fulfilling that the striving away from now ceases, and what opens up then is the joy of being through that. It never lasts, it always comes to an end quickly, and then sometimes it can turn into pain, or it leaves the need for some other pleasure.

But we are here to allow this moment to be, so nobody here is saying, don't go into sense pleasures, that will lead you astray. No, go into it fully, if that's what is. Be fully with whatever is.

Even a sense pleasure, if you go into it fully, it'll take you, anything that you go into fully can take you there. So you won't lose anything. A certain shift may happen, you may not need to seek sense pleasures, but enjoy them when they come.

Nobody here needs to be lost in being, so to speak, being swallowed up by that. And I'm sure there have been people that we never heard of, whose body dissolved very quickly, they got swallowed up in being and then the body died. Left behind was just a bliss, point of bliss, a blissful cell in the body of God.

And maybe that blissful cell then had so much bliss that it chooses to go into delusion again. There's so much bliss to spare that it chooses to go into delusion again, okay? Pretend that you have another body, and then you have to go for, just like the embryo has to repeat all the stages of evolution from being like a fish, gills, reptile, fish, and also you have to go through the stages of delusion again.

And you lose the bliss that's covered up, and then at some point, sooner rather than later, it's there again. And then you teach, and then you go on vacation again. And here we have a question that just leads on from there.

Since I have begun allowing presence to rise in my awareness, I experience resistance to the people and activities that used to occupy all of my time. I still love my friends and family, but do not wish to participate in much of their normality. What is this?

Well, I'm sure many of you have experienced or are experiencing. This could turn into resistance, but originally it's not so much resistance as a strange sense of not being in attunement with certain things that people do around you. You might feel that, I might feel that if I went into a discotheque.

And it's fine, the extremely loud music and the people drinking, and it's fine, they're enjoying themselves. But probably, I haven't tried it for a long time, I would probably remove myself fairly quickly. Because it's a different, it's a vibrational frequency that I don't feel drawn to.

This frequency does not feel drawn to that. But if I got shot in there, can't leave, then my choice is acceptance or surrender. And the acceptance would take me beyond this, still on a kind of phenomenal manifestation of vibrational frequencies.

The surrender takes me to a deeper place where the frequencies don't matter anymore. I may be totally out of attunement, maybe they'll put me in prison somewhere. Certainly I would not feel in tune with my surroundings.

So, if I had a choice, I would walk out. But in prison, usually you don't have a choice. So then, surrender happens.

And then whether or not on the level of form, because that is still form, you resonate with your surroundings or not becomes immaterial, because you go through surrender, you go deeper, beyond form. And not that you're ever in suffering when you don't resonate, you just sense that you don't resonate. There's no reactive entity that derives some kind of pleasure from its resistance to that.

You simply sense there's no resonance with what these people, they may be drinking, whatever it is. So, if you can remove yourself, you remove yourself. If you cannot remove yourself, you're trapped.

Surrender takes you beyond anything on the level of form. And there's suddenly enormous bliss, joy, in the midst of hell perhaps. The externals may be hell.

And some people have found themselves in hell externally. They certainly didn't resonate with being in a concentration camp or prison camp or close to waiting for execution in some mad place. They certainly didn't resonate with that.

But surrender happened. So you can still sense, it doesn't, strange people sometimes think surrender means wherever you are and whatever happens, you say yes externally. That's not the case.

Externally, you can say no, either words coming out of your mouth saying no, or you say no by removing yourself, and nevertheless not be in a state of inner resistance. Simply, you remove yourself. Or the word no comes out of your mouth, but not a resistant no.

Let's say you meet somebody who very clearly wants to get some money out of you and needs it for whatever they want to do with it. Let me please just another \$1,000. And you may find yourself saying no.

Or you say eat this, it'll do you good. And you sense that it won't do you good. And you say no, I won't eat that.

It's not that you say yes to everything necessarily. Occasionally, the situation demands that you say no, and the no comes out of presence. But it's not resistant.

It is not a reactive no. No, I'm not going to eat that. Who do you think I am?

Or this is awful. So you're already making this right and wrong when it's a reactive no. Somebody is wrong.

If not a person, a situation. You can also make a situation wrong. And then you're in a reactive relationship to a situation.

And there's also a me in it. Me, you give that to me. So that's the reactive no, and that's normal.

And then there is the non-reactive no, and you just look at it. No, no, no, I won't eat that. Why not?

Well, it doesn't feel, the body doesn't want it. Okay. No, but you must eat.

No, no, I won't. Non-reactive. Can be very clear too, very no.

And it doesn't contain that violence that the reactive no has. It doesn't contain that it can be very powerful, but it contains no violence, no opposing force. Simply no.

And the same no can exist when you remove yourself from a situation. Now, if somebody

forced you to eat that, maybe you are in some mad prison camp or whatever, you must, you might, as what was the famous Greek philosopher who had to drink poison, Socrates perhaps. And so he had to drink it.

And then, I wasn't there, but I would say there was surrender, complete surrender. There was no no left. And with that, there was deep peace.

So to see that there can be a no at the same time as there's a continuous inner yes, a non-resistant or as I sometimes call it, a high quality no. And many people find or have found, many of you, that there are certain people with whom you don't resonate anymore. It's not so much the people, it's their minds, what they manifest, the activities that they manifest through their mind, the words.

Perhaps you used to go to shopping malls every weekend with your friends, shopping, looking for yourself. And then that compulsive looking for yourself isn't there anymore. So you may not enjoy walking around shopping malls every weekend.

And so your friends say, what's happened to you? I just don't enjoy it anymore. I still love you, but I don't enjoy that.

And then sometimes as the shift happens in you, you pull people that are close to you with you. They also go through changes. Sometimes without even saying anything or very much, if there's a slightest opening, they will notice that inner change in you.

And some, the opening is not there, they won't want to see you anymore because you're no fun anymore, according to their view of fun. Of course, to you, you have much more fun really than walking around shopping malls could ever be. Not that when you visit shopping malls again, you would derive some sense of self from feeling above it all.

And that's the little danger of the ego. You remember the joke about the rabbi and the priest, how easily you could then walk with a very subtle, but strong, but subtle sense of superiority. Or you find yourself walking into McDonald's and detecting a very subtle sense of superiority.

In other words, the ego has come in again through the back door and if you're not very alert within yourself, you won't notice it, that you see yourself as superior and therefore have created another conceptualized me in the head. The origin may have been presence. You don't enjoy it anymore because of presence, but even as presence arises at various stages of the arising of presence, ego can come in and claim a me.

Any time that any sense of either superiority or inferiority arises, and you have to be alert to know it within yourself, it's egoic. To feel inferior to another human being is ego. To feel superior to another human being is ego.

Because you have made a form identity out of that human being and compared to your

own form. Where do I stand here? And if you feel inferior towards another human being, perhaps because he or she is more, you see, him or her is more spiritual, whatever it may be, famous, wealthy, so that inferiority is a hidden desire to be superior.

It's the inverted ego's desire to feel superior. So detecting that in oneself, that comparing yourself to others, of course in Miracles has a beautiful statement and says, comparison is an ego device. Always the ego, always compare, where do I stand in relation to that person?

Very subtle process. And then it's need, if it can, it will claim superiority somewhere. So if you meet an extremely wealthy person, you might feel, well, but I'm so much more spiritual than you.

And it's not that you need to deny that in yourself and think, now you have failed. The greatest thing is to detect something like that in yourself. Because by detecting it, it stands revealed.

It is no longer running you. That's really all that's needed. To see these subtle movements in oneself is enough to see it.

Oh, there it is. I was sitting in McDonald's. I don't know what you're doing there.

If you're already spiritual, who knows? I'm often forced to go to places, not, I haven't been to McDonald's for a while, but I'm often forced because of all the traveling and often times if you're away from cities, there are only fast food places, junk food places that you can go to on long car trips. So you have to go in and be there, feel at home there.

It's fine. That sense of separation goes that you feel in any way, there's a question we may come to it today about sense of when one in spiritual work, there's a metaphor that can be used that is you're going up a mountain. And like all metaphors, of course, it's not totally, not quite adequate.

And then sensing that you become more and more removed from the ordinary human condition. And that's not really the case at all. So a better metaphor, which we'll come to that, the question I mentioned, is going down rather than going up.

And we've been addressing that as death, encountering death, going into that rather than seeking to go up. And when you go into that depth, that's the top of the mountain at the same time. But it's not, there's no sense of separation and no sense of superiority.

Nothing could be further from the truth than any sense of separation from anyone else. But, of course, you see spiritual people who look aloof. And sometimes they are very serious practitioners.

And there are people who try to, they imitate the form sometimes not knowing it of Zen, for example. Zen is beautiful, but every practice can lead to ego in a subtle way. You then form an image of, I am a Zen practitioner.

And then you become very aloof because they are like that. But not the real master. It's different.

So you, I visited monasteries and whenever I approached the one or two monks who embodied the fullness of consciousness and occasionally the abbot, there's no sense of position when you speak to them. And then you talk to other monks that have been there for three or four or five years or six months and there's a strong sense of how important I am. Are you aware that you're talking to a Buddhist monk?

It's implied. And they don't, it's so subtle, they don't see it. If they saw it, they would laugh.

Maybe if they saw a video, they would laugh and it would dissolve. So certain people in your life, you feel that they don't see it and the activities that are engaged in, you may not feel drawn to that. Some people may leave you and that's okay.

Others may change around you. And in rare cases, some people may neither leave you nor change. This could be your mother.

This could be your father. I'm speaking from personal experience. And you love them.

Long ago, you might have had the demand that your mother or father should understand you. And that demand, which is a mental position, caused a lot of suffering. You should understand.

Why don't you understand me? And then at some point, that mental position dropped, was relinquished. I don't need you to understand me.

You don't need to say that. The need just doesn't arise. Why do you need to be?

Does it add anything to who you are being understood by your mother or your father? Does it add to your sense of identity? Please give me your understanding.

I can be more fully myself if you understand me. I need that. And I can add that too.

I won't be complete unless you understand me. It adds nothing. And then it's beautiful when that love is there that is not conditional upon you understanding me.

So certain people, and it can be people with whom you have family ties. It's a strange thing. In your family, brothers, sisters, parents, there are people with whom you wouldn't spend much time if you met them.

It's a strange thing. You'd say, I wouldn't want to have a meal with that person. And yet, not on the level of form, because on the level of form, you have nothing in common, it seems.

And yet, that person is there in your life. And that is fine. And so you drop down beyond form or demanding anything on the level of form.

And there's love and the allowing. Now you may not choose to live with that person, or you may not have a choice. Maybe there's no other place where you could live, who knows?

And beautiful surrender practice. And yes, some friends you may lose, other friends will become transformed with you. And that's beautiful too.

I knew somebody who had a highly developed mind and he was continuously invited to dinner parties because he was the life and the heart of every dinner party with his funny stories. Witty, intelligent, funny, often about other people and often with an added element of exaggeration or lie to make it more witty and more funny. That's why they invited him.

And then he noticed his mind movements and he stopped telling these exaggerated, often not true stories and he got fewer and fewer invitations to dinner parties. He wasn't in demand anymore. That can happen.

But on the level of form, very often other forms, humans, human forms, you may draw into your life. They just, through resonance, come into your life with which you resonate more on the level of form. But the love is equal, that you sense, whether you go to McDonald's and there are people sitting around you, or somebody with whom on the level of form you resonate, the love is the same.

It's not that you love one person more than that. That's the beauty of it. A strange little story to illustrate this.

In this small town where I lived in England for a few years, there was a woman who was strongly identified with ego, an extreme illustration of ego, because she caused a lot of trouble for everybody, as the ego does, and many people avoided her and they often would talk about her. Oh no, she's coming, let's leave. And they would all run away when she was due to arrive somewhere.

And one day I found myself walking along the main street and she was coming the opposite direction and I found myself crossing over to the other side. And the following week, I was walking along the main street again, and there she came just around the corner. I couldn't cross over to the other side, there wasn't enough time, and there she stood in front of me.

Now that strange thing happened. I felt, at the moment she stood in front of me, I felt enormous love. It wasn't my choice to stand in front of her on the level of form, but when the form suddenly stood there, there was only love.

So the two levels, any form that comes into your life is the appearance of the now in this form, and it's beautiful. At another time she came, visited me, and she sat next to me on the sofa and talked about her heavy problems involving attorneys and struggles against evil people. And I watched her and suddenly she put down the papers she had.

Similar things had happened to me before with other people and still happen. A sudden shift from intense identification with ego to, and she looked, and then she said, there's only love, isn't there? That is how it can, it is amazing how suddenly, in the presence of presence, how the shift can happen.

The whole, it wasn't yet permanent in her case, but it was there. And it's a miracle when that happens. And you, if you haven't experienced that already with people, as you embody presence, so to speak, egoic entities come into your life and are not resisted, and see often how the shift can happen.

And there is that beautiful being suddenly coming through. Before there was the Halloween mask, and suddenly there's that. A course in miracles says, no one dies without their own consent.

I don't really want to die to the body before I have a chance to die to the ego, even though I know there's great opportunity for transcendence in physical death. Do I have a conscious choice? That's simple.

You have already exercised your choice. You're here. This is the conscious death.

This is finding death before death finds you. It's nice to have short answers. There are some longstanding chronic ailments in the body that don't seem to respond to alternative therapies.

The liver appears to be steadily and rapidly getting worse since August. The doctors do not recommend conventional treatment. They feel it's too rough for this body.

The healer feels that suppressed emotions that have been releasing slowly now must be released fast, or the body will not survive more than six months to a year. Do you feel emotional release work, such as rebirthing or some sort of psychotherapy or energy work, would be worthwhile, or would being present as much as possible be just as effective? Thank you.

I am 55 today. Yesterday, happy birthday. And I am honored to spend my birthday in your presence.

It appears here that there is little time. That may not be the truth, but that is the appearance. It may be the truth or it may not be the truth.

But there's no greater opportunity for presence, the arising of presence, than sensing that there is little time or no time left. The truth is that a lie is to everybody, because it's not, there isn't that much time. And I have met people who were given a few months to live, and that was 20 years ago, and they're still here.

On the level of form, I can never tell people what to do. Release through some kind of body work or breathing may be helpful. But continuous, intense, intense, intense, intense, intense presence, and you have great motivation now for intense presence, especially sensing the inner body with great intensity.

Jesus said, pray without ceasing. And I'm sure he didn't mean that you should mumble 24 hours a day. He used pray in a deeper sense.

And I'm sure he didn't mean that. And this is, be present continuously and intensely in the body. Refuse to leave the now.

That is intense presence. Uncompromising no to past and future, and yes to now. Even at night, whenever there's this, you're awake, intense aliveness throughout every cell of the body, as if you only had, there's no time left at all.

Just this. Imagine sitting here and having no future at all. And at the same time, the two are so intimately connected.

The past collapses too. Time collapses here. Imagine that you have no past and future.

Only this. Only this. And that's the truth.

I just had imagined, to fool you, because you have only this. I just imagined so that you didn't completely reject what I'm saying. And that's why I'll say it again, just to get in there.

Imagine you have no past and future. Only this. They collapse.

On the left is past, it collapses. On the right is future, it collapses. These two edifices, mental structures, collapse.

So before you walked like that, heaviness here, heaviness there. And sometimes you would look that way and see the heaviness, and then you look that way, future. And then you walk on.

That's how people live. And very rarely do they look here. Their look is either there or there.

And there they walk, usually in the same spot. And then they've been there for a while, and then they go, oh, that's right. Oh, no, that wasn't right.

That shouldn't have happened. That might happen, will happen. What if that happens?

Or that might not happen? And so you've lived with that heaviness for lifetimes. I'm talking to humanity.

You don't have to believe in lifetimes if you don't want to. And then suddenly, sometimes through a shock, perhaps somebody tells you you have no more time, or some strange spiritual teacher says, imagine that there's no time. And time collapses and that weight, and there's an intense and total awakening in now.

And then you stay in it, because especially in your case, the questioner, any movement away from now will take you into suffering. Is that the avoidance of suffering? Is that running away from suffering?

No. It takes you deeper than suffering. There's no avoidance when you totally face the now.

Now, in that now, there may be pain in the body somewhere. There may be discomfort in the body somewhere. There may be disability.

Perhaps somebody can hardly move anymore or can't move at all. And that is the now. But it is faced so completely that no conceptual entity arises anymore in the mind, and that conceptual entity lives through past and future, and complains or fears or denies, leaves the now, creates an imaginary future, and in that imaginary future, all you encounter is death.

That's dreadful. And you have avoided the death that is here already by projecting yourself to an imaginary future where the body dies, perhaps soon, but still future, and then being extremely fearful about that. But what you're avoiding is dying now.